

High performance infrastructure drives higher quality of service at Southbank Centre



Kavanagh's solution, based on HP technology, improves ticketing and delivers a richer, more rewarding experience for customers.

The Royal Festival Hall stands at the heart of the Southbank Centre complex in London. Opened in 1951, as part of the Festival of Britain, this Grade I listed building is one of the world's leading performance venues. The Royal Festival Hall was closed in 2005 for extensive refurbishment. With the re-opening in June 2007, the transformation has restored it to its original modernist glory, while significantly upgrading the acoustics and facilities.

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**MARK POUNTNEY,
HEAD OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND
TECHNOLOGY, SOUTHBANK CENTRE**

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE

With just thirteen weeks to go until Southbank Centre started selling tickets for the re-opening of the Royal Festival Hall, Mark Pountney, Head of Information Systems and Technology, Southbank Centre, faced a significant challenge. "We needed a new ticketing and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system," he says. "It had become clear that our existing systems lacked functionality in certain areas. In addition, we wanted to improve the end-to-end experience of our customers."

Arts organisations have some very specific requirements, so Mark and his team were able to quickly narrow their search and select Tessitura Arts Enterprise Software as their preferred solution. This software is successfully used by many Arts organisations worldwide, including the Sydney Opera House.

With the software chosen, attention turned to selecting the right infrastructure. HP is Southbank Centre's preferred platform. Tessitura Arts suggested a configuration that would have met Southbank Centre's minimum requirements, however, there were other considerations to be taken into account.

"At the time most of our storage was directly attached to servers," says Mark. "We wanted to create a more resilient and scalable storage environment by implementing a Storage Area Network (SAN). In addition, we wanted to be sure the infrastructure we chose would meet our expansion needs for at least the next three years."



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With this in mind Southbank Centre contacted a number of HP partners for proposals, one of which was Kavanagh. “Kavanagh was initially recommended to me by an internal contact,” says Mark. “HP was happy to back up the recommendation, so we asked them for a proposal.”

PROVING PERFORMANCE

Kavanagh conducted workshops with Southbank Centre to establish what the new infrastructure would look like. Two critical requirements emerged. The solution had to be highly scalable, to meet peak demand for tickets, and it had to be available 24/7, 365 days a year to cultivate a positive customer experience and increase on-line ticket sales.

In the background, Kavanagh evaluated the On Line Transaction Processing (OLTP) performance of the HP Integrity servers it was intending to propose, in order to ensure that they would scale to the required throughput.

“Projects like this always present risks and not everything goes to plan all the time. Kavanagh’s specialists demonstrated that they clearly understood our business needs. When the pressure was on they collaboratively discussed solutions and the impact on the project. I was able to trust what they were saying, which saved a great deal of time”.

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EXPERIENCE WINS

The selected HP partners presented their solutions to Southbank Centre. For the ticketing system Kavanagh proposed an HP Integrity server. This dynamically scalable, continuously available, next generation server is ideally suited for application and database environments.

For the SAN, Kavanagh proposed an HP StorageWorks Enterprise Virtual Array. Designed for business critical applications, this virtual array storage solution saves time, space and cost compared to traditionally architected storage.

After careful consideration Kavanagh was awarded the contract. “Obviously price was a consideration,” says Mark. “But we were also under time pressure, so we needed to be sure that whoever we chose could actually deliver in the timescale we needed. Kavanagh clearly demonstrated its knowledge and experience of the equipment it was proposing during the tender process. Compared to some of the other suppliers it had far more experience of the data centre and demonstrable project management capability. Choosing Kavanagh was not only the lowest risk option, it was price competitive too.”

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CHRISTMAS WORKING

With Southbank Centre needing to start selling tickets in January 2007, only five and a half weeks after the order was placed, the installation was scheduled to take place over the Christmas period. Kavanagh appointed a dedicated project manager and the installation planning was based on PRINCE2™ methodology. Kavanagh's specialists installed and configured the HP Integrity server and SAN, ensuring there was a thorough skills transfer on handover.

"It was a tight deadline," comments Mark, "but Kavanagh's staff were very good and worked very closely with us to ensure it was successful. Having a dedicated project manager was also a major benefit. The handover went well and we received full documentation of the implementation which, in my experience, isn't always forthcoming."

Southbank Centre's configuration is a little unusual in that its chosen operating system is Microsoft Windows, rather than HP-UX or Linux. In fact, this caused a few issues during implementation. "HP had just upgraded its line of HP Integrity servers," explains Mark. "That meant the process of configuring it was uncharted territory. But Kavanagh rose to the challenge very quickly and there was no delay to the project. If we had chosen a vendor with less experience of the servers I'm not sure that would have been the case."

"Projects like this always present risks and not everything goes to plan all the time," Mark continues. "Kavanagh's specialists demonstrated that they clearly understood our business needs. When the pressure was on they collaboratively discussed solutions and the impact on the project. I was able to trust what they were saying, which saved a great deal of time".

BENEFITS

The overall solution has now been running for a number of months and Mark is pleased with its performance. From a business perspective the Tessitura Arts Enterprise Software has allowed Southbank Centre to improve customer service both on-line and off-line and is helping Southbank Centre move towards its aim of an integrated customer relationship management system.

The infrastructure is also working well. "From a hardware perspective everything is running as we expected," says Mark. "In terms of throughput the HP Integrity server has proven itself to be up to the job and the scalability will protect our investment for some time to come."

In addition, there are benefits to having the SAN. "We can see that the SAN will reduce our total cost of ownership for storage over the next three years," explains Mark. "It allows us to overcome bottlenecks with server attached storage, plus it is simpler to manage."

FUTURE READY

Mark is also exploring a number of other avenues where the new infrastructure can add value to the business. "Having the SAN allows us to consider virtualisation to improve server utilisation," he says. "We're also looking at how we can consolidate backups, which are time consuming with server attached storage. In addition, we are evaluating how we can leverage the new infrastructure to improve our disaster recovery plans."

Summing up, Mark says: "Kavanagh has a good relationship with HP and is very professional. They were very good to work with, their prices were very competitive and they delivered on time. I would certainly recommend them."

Challenge

- ◆ Implement a new ticketing and CRM system in a limited time, over a peak holiday season
- ◆ Ensure scalability to cope with peak demands
- ◆ Support 24/7 operation, 365 days a year
- ◆ Implement a cost-effective storage solution which provides performance, resilience and scalability

Solution

- ◆ New IT infrastructure based on an HP Integrity server and a SAN

Results

- ◆ Allows higher throughput of ticket sales
- ◆ Increased availability
- ◆ Lower storage total cost of ownership
- ◆ Simpler management
- ◆ Improved customer experience

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Technology highlights

Hardware

- ◆ 1 x HP Integrity server
- ◆ 1 x HP StorageWorks Enterprise Virtual Array

Services

- ◆ Planning Consultancy
- ◆ Implementation Consultancy
- ◆ Project Management
- ◆ Skills Transfer
- ◆ HP Support Plus 24 fronted by Kavanagh

Why Kavanagh?

- ◆ Strong relationship with HP
- ◆ Excellent knowledge and experience of the technologies involved
- ◆ Successful track record of managing data centre projects
- ◆ Competitive pricing

Customer at a glance

- ◆ Southbank Centre consists of the Royal Festival Hall, The Hayward, Queen Elizabeth Hall (containing the Purcell Room) and the Saison Poetry Library. It also manages the Arts Council Collection and organises the National Touring Exhibition programme in venues throughout the UK.
- ◆ Leading performance venue
- ◆ Southbank Centre's wide-ranging programme - classical and world music, rock and pop, jazz, dance, literature and the visual arts - attracts the most diverse audience of any UK venue.
- ◆ www.southbankcentre.co.uk

For further information on how working with Kavanagh can benefit you please call 01344 409800 or visit www.kavanagh.co.uk

Kavanagh's Strategic Partners:

2008 Preferred Partner



Tel: 01344 409800
Fax: 01344 409700
Email: Kavanagh@kavanagh.co.uk

Kavanagh, 1 Arlington Square, Downshire Way, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1WA
Kavanagh, Tower 42, 25 Old Broad Street, London, EC2N 1HQ
Kavanagh, Bollin House, Bollin Walk, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 1DP
www.kavanagh.co.uk