



Robert McBride cuts IT costs dramatically with Kavanagh



Kavanagh's solution, based on advanced HP technology meets the ambitious targets set by Robert McBride for TCO, performance and manageability.

Robert McBride Ltd is a fully owned subsidiary of £600 million McBride plc, the leading European producer of private label household and personal care products. With nine sites in the UK, including seven manufacturing operations, Robert McBride is heavily dependent on efficient and reliable IT services to run its business and support its plans for future business growth.

THE CHALLENGE

David Birchall, Technical Operations Manager at Robert McBride's Middleton headquarters, knew that his aging IT infrastructure needed replacing. He and his team put together an Invitation To Tender (ITT) that described their existing infrastructure and laid out the company's business needs in terms of user workload and IT growth over the next five years.

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TECHNICAL OPERATIONS MANAGER,
ROBERT McBRIDE

The most important objectives for the new infrastructure initiative were to achieve a major reduction in IT spend and to ensure a clear understanding of costs for the next five years. In addition to these goals, the ITT identified demanding targets for performance, improved manageability, increased capacity and extensibility. Very high levels of stability and reliability were also required.

The reliability targets were of particular concern to the company as it had stringent SLAs in place with customers that specify a minimum of 98.5% on-time delivery of goods, with severe penalties for non-compliance. The high degree of automation used in production and shipping is instrumental to fast and timely delivery, but it also means that the systems responsible must always be available.

Responses to the ITT covered a broad spectrum of technical choices. A rigorous process to evaluate both the solution providers and the proposed IT systems resulted in Kavanagh with its HP based solution being selected.

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The choice of development partner was as crucial to David as the design of the IT systems. With such a high profile project, involving the complete replacement of its IT infrastructure to tight deadlines and without disruption to the business, he had to have a high degree of confidence in the solution provider.

Kavanagh quickly established a good working relationship with David and his team by listening carefully to their business needs. Kavanagh also ran demos to prove the power and flexibility of the HP blade server and SAN technology proposed.





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IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION

A joint project team of Kavanagh and Robert McBride personnel was assembled and began the planning and ordering of equipment with the aim of having the project completed within six months. Planning and project management were complex tasks because of the scale of the operation and the need to coordinate with new networking, which was being installed at the same time. It was also necessary to work closely with all the business departments affected to avoid any adverse impact on business operations.

The new infrastructure features a production environment at Robert McBride's data centre in Warrington, supported by a full Disaster Recovery (DR) site in Leeds. The production data centre employs 37 HP blade servers, an HP EVA SAN with tape backup, plus storage and management servers. The DR configuration consists of 19 blade servers and another SAN with tape backup. New, high performance networks were put into place at the same time. This infrastructure has to support over 1400 people, including 1000 email users, and be available 24 hours a day.

A phased approach was taken to deployment with the functional areas of Citrix services, file and print servers, email, Internet access and SAP applications being migrated in stages. The execution of delivery, shipping of old kit back to HP, installation, setup and acceptance testing had to be carried out with precision to meet the tight timescales required.

In order to meet the planned deadlines, Kavanagh consultants assembled the servers and built the operating systems in parallel with installation and testing activities. They worked closely with Robert McBride staff to resolve issues quickly and keep the user community informed.

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THE KAVANAGH CONTRIBUTION

The new infrastructure has met all expectations for performance and capacity. The IT organisation is particularly impressed by the resulting benefits in manageability. Key to this improved capability are the powerful HP systems administration tools that are an intrinsic part of the solution.

HP Systems Insight Manager provides monitoring, diagnostics and administration for the entire configuration from any local or remote location and the HP Rapid Deployment Pack greatly reduces the effort required to install and configure new servers. A new system can now be built in under an hour, as opposed to the usual four or more hours.

These comprehensive and highly usable system management facilities, together with the inherent stability of the HP servers, greatly reduce the amount of time spent looking after the infrastructure. "A major benefit of the decreased system management workload is that IT staff can now spend more time on user issues, such as optimising the SAP business applications or adding new functionality," observes David.

The hardware upgrade means that Robert McBride can move to the latest version of their SAP packages, which run faster. Responsiveness is also enhanced by the fact that the database servers are also now much quicker. This high performance does not mean less reliability – the new storage systems still deliver the 99.999% availability required.

DR capability has been greatly extended by the increased capacity at Leeds. This is of major benefit to business continuity as DR coverage is no longer limited to a few critical systems. Although some use is made of the backup systems at Leeds during normal operations, switching of production systems in the event of a major disruption is both automatic and immediate.

One of the objectives of the project was to provide an infrastructure that would grow with the business. Since the new systems went live, two new factories have been added and the extra workload absorbed without problems.

David is particularly pleased that the overall cost of IT has been dramatically reduced and the ongoing costs are now well understood. He concludes, "We have complete confidence in Kavanagh and our HP equipment and will continue to use both for new IT initiatives in the future."

Challenge

- ◆ Bring infrastructure up to date
- ◆ Reduce IT costs
- ◆ Improve predictability of future IT costs
- ◆ Increase performance and capacity for growth
- ◆ Upgrade to new version of SAP applications
- ◆ Migrate all services to new infrastructure

Solution

- ◆ New IT infrastructure based on HP blade servers and SANs
- ◆ Full DR environment in remote location
- ◆ HP Systems Insight Manager and Rapid Deployment Pack for management
- ◆ Move to latest versions of SAP software

Results

- ◆ Greatly reduced IT costs
- ◆ Much improved performance
- ◆ Increased resilience and availability
- ◆ Greater workload supported
- ◆ Dramatically reduced system management overhead
- ◆ Improved scalability for growth

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Technology highlights

Hardware

- ◆ 33 x HP ProLiant BL35 Blade Servers
- ◆ 25 x HP ProLiant BL25 Blade Servers
- ◆ HP ProLiant DL380 Server
- ◆ HP ProLiant DL360 Server
- ◆ HP StorageWorks EVA 6000
- ◆ HP StorageWorks EVA 4000
- ◆ HP StorageWorks MSL6060 Tape Library
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Services

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

Software

- ◆ HP Systems Insight Manager
- ◆ HP Rapid Deployment Pack

Why Kavanagh?

- ◆ Strong relationship with HP
- ◆ Excellent project planning and management skills
- ◆ Technical expertise
- ◆ Competitive pricing
- ◆ First class support and training

Customer at a glance

- ◆ Robert McBride – leading manufacturer of private label household and personal care products
- ◆ Seven manufacturing sites in the UK
- ◆ Part of £600M McBride group
- ◆ 1400 system users
- ◆ www.mcbride.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



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