

Making a Case for Business Continuity

Gen-i Project Services helps the ANZCO Group develop and implement its business continuity strategy.

Working with Gen-i Project Services, ANZCO implemented an ambitious and far-reaching programme of work to protect and future-proof the business's core IT infrastructure.

Business background

The ANZCO Group is a billion dollar meat processing, marketing and exporting business, grown by acquisition and operating under the following brands: Canterbury Meat Packers, Crown, Riverlands, ANZCO, Five Star Beef, and Angel Bay.

The business operates 24/7 at sites up and down the country, and includes marketing offices overseas. As a result, there is a tremendous reliance on a highly available IT service.

Protection for now and the future

The company was concerned about the Group's reliance on a single rurally located data centre. Its importance to the business had increased as the IT systems from each acquisition were assimilated into the centre. Network links into the site were approaching full capacity, and major service outages from inclement weather and disrupted power supplies were becoming more frequent. The data centre itself lacked the necessary capacity and robustness.

ANZCO's IT Manager, Mark Rance, engaged Gen-i Project Services to define a "business continuity"

roadmap – a set of measures directly aimed at ensuring better protection of the IT asset. Gen-i's role was to develop and evaluate options for achieving the desired objectives, and to translate these into a business case and recommendation for business stakeholder approval.

"The business units need assurance that the IT service will be robust and will continue to support their growing businesses," said Mark. "This is key to maintaining support for all we are trying to achieve in the way of group synergies and common processes."

Ensuring a robust business continuity strategy

The roadmap had the following main components:

- A re-architecting of ANZCO's existing IT infrastructure in order to reduce the impact on the business of hardware failure (as well as providing much needed capacity for growth);
- Transfer of core IT infrastructure assets into a secure, fully managed data centre environment;
- Strengthening of the business capability to continue operating in a situation of prolonged IT service outage;
- Preparation for a future geographical split of the hosted IT infrastructure across two major centres (removing the reliance on a single data centre location).

Working closely with ANZCO, Gen-i developed a comprehensive business case to describe the required investment. The business case comprised the following:

- Evaluation of different ways of achieving the required outcomes (including bolstering the resilience of the current data centre rather than moving to a third party facility) with a focus on mitigating the impact on the business of the transition;
- Quantitative evaluation of the comparative costs and return on investment (ROI) of each option, from “do nothing” through to full investment;
- Support for the submission of the strategy and the associated capital expenditure request to the ANZCO business.

The business case was informed by a key piece of analysis – Business Impact Assessment. This quantified the potential financial impact on the business if it allowed the status quo to continue. This was a measure of the likelihood of various events happening (such as complete loss of power to site) coupled with the resultant loss in revenue or additional cost that could be expected to be incurred.

Translating technology solutions into business outcomes

Gen-i assisted with the development of a presentation, ensuring that the technicalities of the solution were clearly spelt out in business terms that key business stakeholders could understand. Jargon was avoided, and technical concepts explained in terms of the opportunities they presented to the business or the risks they mitigated.

The first audience was the IT Steering Group and several presentations were made, to ensure that all perspectives were understood and concerns mitigated.

Some business units would gain more from the strategy than others, so it was crucial that the various parties understood what the investment would do for the ANZCO Group as a whole such that they could buy into the “bigger picture”.

Having gained the IT Steering Group’s approval, the strategy was put to the main Board for sign-off for the required capital investment. This was duly achieved at the first attempt.

A truly seamless transition

Once the strategy had the green light, the Gen-i Project Manager mobilised a mixed Gen-i/client project team to deliver the first two elements of the strategy – re-architecting the existing server and storage infrastructure to achieve higher levels of hardware fault tolerance, and transitioning the resultant systems into a Telecom hosting facility.

The production IT infrastructure was effectively re-architected “in situ” i.e. without the benefit of a development environment. The risk to business operations was minimised by careful planning and good communications between the teams.

On completion of a seamless migration into the hosting facility over a holiday weekend, Mark Rance commented:

“I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for an excellent effort from the Gen-i team. I have to admit to being a little deflated the day after the move as there was little or no reaction internally to what is without doubt a great outcome to the single biggest IT project we have had for a long time. However, I guess this was the biggest compliment the business could pay – if we did what we did and nobody noticed, then we did a fantastic job.”