

Gen-i implements Linux Infrastructure at Public Trust

In a first for a New Zealand public sector organisation, Gen-i partnered with Public Trust's in-house IT team to overhaul its entire infrastructure, migrating towards a Linux infrastructure based on the latest Novell technology.

Gen-i made a significant investment in training its consultants in the latest Novell products, before successfully implementing Novell Open Enterprise Server, Novell ZENworks 7 Suite, Novell Identity Manager and Novell eDirectory on HP blade hardware and HP EVA SAN Storage solution. This stabilised and modernised the organisation's IT platform to support future projects that would add value for staff and customers, and ultimately the business.

As part of this project Gen-i also upgraded the rest of the Microsoft environment to Microsoft Active Directory and Microsoft Exchange 2003 and built and upgraded the Citrix Server environment.

About Public Trust

Public Trust is New Zealand's largest and oldest trustee organisation. Established in 1873 as the Public Trust Office of New Zealand, Public Trust became a Crown entity in 2001. It provides New Zealanders with the legal and financial expertise and services they need at different stages of their life – and after they have passed.

Its infrastructure supports 450 users in 40 sites, 35 of which are customer service centres located across the country. With more than 190,000 customers, Public Trust processes over 1,000 documents, such as wills, investment statements and reports, customer letters, each week.

With the trust of its staff and customers at stake, IT reliability and cost effectiveness are key to Public Trust.

Challenge – Out-of-date legacy infrastructure

Despite having served the organisation well over the years, Public Trust's five year old legacy infrastructure was becoming stressed. Its myriad of existing servers, operating systems, and network systems were out-of-date, with many no longer being supported. Public Trust suffered from increasing demands on services, a growing number of outages, and regular application failures, impacting on staff productivity across all business areas and draining IT resources.

The organisation wanted to consolidate its vendor products to improve day-to-day infrastructure management and free up IT resources to focus on added value opportunities for the business.

With a long term view, management also wanted to do more for its staff and customers in the future, so a platform was sought to support new additional technologies and processes that the old infrastructure would not be able to handle, such as remote access for estate managers, and online access for all customers.

Solution – Groundbreaking Novell/HP Blade Deployment

Public Trust partnered with Gen-i, to implement Novell Open Enterprise Server, Novell ZENworks, Novell Identity Manager, and Novell eDirectory on HP blade hardware, an HP EVA SAN Storage solution, working with other existing applications.

Craig Green, Head of Information Services, Public Trust says the organisation wanted a Linux platform and Gen-i's Novell solution was evaluated as the strongest offering. Public Trust had built a relationship with Gen-i over 13 years, and trusted the company to deliver on its commitment to upskill its consultants in the chosen new-to-market Novell enterprise management suite.

“Having decided on a future with Linux, we reviewed alternative platforms during an RFP process, and Gen-i's Novell solution clearly stood out,” says Green. “Novell Open Enterprise Server included SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, which would give us the open platform we were looking for.”

Public Trust also migrated Microsoft SMS to Novell ZENworks to improve application deployment and help it better manage and maintain its IT resources.

“Novell ZENworks gives us a single method of managing the organisation's infrastructure, enabling us to proactively act on any identified issues, as well as rollout product updates across the entire infrastructure, automatically,” says Daniel Smith, Public Trust Technical Architect.

To enable Public Trust to simplify the provision and management of user passwords, Gen-i connected Microsoft Active Directory to Novell eDirectory, using Novell Identity Manager.

“With Novell Identity Manager we can now move towards a single sign on for users, whereas staff in the past had to log on five or six times to access the system,” says Smith.

Meanwhile, the old Microsoft NT4 domain was upgraded to Microsoft Active Directory, and Microsoft Exchange 5.5 was migrated to the latest Microsoft Exchange 2003. Gen-i also built and deployed the new

Citrix Presentation Server 4 servers, to give staff fast, simple and secure access to the business-critical applications they need.

The project was signed off in April 2005, followed by hardware purchases and internal training and testing. Implementation started in February 2006, and was completed on time, eight months later.

Results – Platform for now, and the future

As a result of implementing Novell Open Enterprise Server, Novell ZENworks, Novell Identity Manager and Novell eDirectory, Public Trust has a supported and up-to-date, open infrastructure. The organisation has increased server capacity, improved system reliability, and streamlined how the IT team manages the infrastructure, which has reduced costs substantially. It has also deployed a scalable platform – all enabling the organisation to investigate added value opportunities for the future of the business.

“Now that we have a consolidated vendor and hardware base, the in-house knowledge and skills are no longer spread too thinly, our disaster recovery programme is stronger, and we have a better view of our infrastructure so it is easier and more cost effective to manage,” says Green.

Meanwhile, Public Trust is future-proofed thanks to the chosen Novell solution.

“We feel we have done the hard groundwork for the future,” says Green. “If there is ever a need for major expansion, we are now in a better position to handle that than we would have been. We can also provide many additional benefits for staff and customers, as required.”

“Already we have had staff come to us with project ideas, and we can see that we now have the system to potentially do it,” he says. “We wouldn't have been able to say that with our old infrastructure, so it is very exciting to be able to say 'sure, we can look at that for you'.”

True to its word, Gen-i committed to upskilling its team in Novell products and installed two consultants in-house at Public Trust, providing the organisation with a consistent, focused resource. Gen-i also provided on-call support to its other consultant specialists, such as security and engineering, as required.

"It was the high quality individuals, and the background organisational support Gen-i gave that made this Novell project a success," says Maryann Nesbitt, Project Manager, Public Trust. "The whole team was incredibly committed to see this project work."

"A phased roll-out and good communications meant staff saw very few changes upfront, which was impressive considering all the hard work happening behind the scenes," adds Nesbitt. "We did it within budget and within timeframe, which I am very happy about."

Public Trust is now looking to expand its Novell eDirectory environment so the organisation can provide employees, such as Customer Service Managers, Estate Managers and staff who visit customers in rest homes, with convenient remote access and roaming ability.

Key Results

- Consolidated platform, improving infrastructure management
- Increased server capacity
- Increased system speed for users, significantly improving productivity
- Decreased contract maintenance and servicing
- Reduced reporting time and overnight batch processing

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