WESTS GROUP

'RELIABLE I.T INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDES A SECURE FOUNDATION FOR THE WESTS GROUP.'

The Wests Group is one of the largest club groups in NSW with facilities at New Lambton, Mayfield, Nelson Bay and Newcastle. Across these locations, Wests offers quality entertainment, accommodation, dining and gymnasium facilities to its members up to 24 hours a day.

With a membership base of almost 100,000, the organisation has long focused on offering outstanding facilities and excellent customer service. To meet this considerable challenge, Wests partnered with OAS to develop a reliable, secure IT infrastructure to minimise system downtime.

THE CHALLENGE

Behind Wests' facilities were the many technical operations such as hotel booking systems, food and beverage tills, club and gym membership systems, concert ticketing and gaming. However in certain instances, such as a meal being charged to a guest room, these separate operations required an effective integration. At the same time, the system would need to isolate potential system faults and prevent them from affecting unrelated applications.

Next, the sheer scope of operations posed a challenge for securing data. The quantity of data Wests used meant traditional tape backup took more than ten hours to complete each day. If an issue occurred during this period, data was lost making such a mode of backup ineffective for 24-hour operation.

Wests also required a system that would sustain its continual business growth. As new premises were added to the organisation's portfolio, it was necessary to have the system designed to be highly scalable - allowing additional users and applications to be integrated with ease.

THE SOLUTION

OAS undertook substantial measures to address these areas of concern, partnering with experienced enterprise hardware providers Acer and Hitachi.

The first step was to design and install several physical and virtual servers. Primarily based on the Windows Server 2008 platform, these safeguarded individual networked applications from technical issues by isolating them into dedicated physical or virtual server devices.

Next, OAS installed a clustered terminal server farm featuring load balancing and scaling. For the organisation's 150 network users, this offered noticeable improvements in speed and reliability when it came to accessing files and applications on the server.

Provision for business growth was made through the installation of a Hitachi enterprise-class fibre storage array, which delivered extensive, high-speed data storage across a dedicated fibre network. Also to allow fast communication between Balance City and Western Suburbs Leagues Club, OAS installed a dedicated, high speed, point-to-point wireless link, with the provision for further wireless links between its other locations.

Wests has trusted OAS to provide reliable IT services that withstand organisational growth, integrate organisational units and deliver a seamless experience.

"Our system has been faultless. In fact, since OAS implemented our most recent system we have had no system downtime whatsoever. This is crucial to the top-class service we strive to offer our members and guests."
- Philip Gardner, CEO of The Wests Group

"Our overall focus was on creating a highly dependable infrastructure," says OAS Technical Manager Justin Cooksey. "We put a great deal of planning into improving Wests' overall performance with a combination of high-speed data transfer, extensive storage and reliable backup."

The data storage system has vastly improved Wests' data backup process. The Hitachi storage array carries out incremental backups throughout the day, with the capacity for point-in-time restores.

"Complete images can be mounted virtually in the unlikely event of hardware failure," says Cooksey.

The storage array is also scalable, meaning the IT system can be expanded when additional facilities are acquired, rather than built from scratch. "When we created Balance City, it was a smooth process to get it connected to the rest of the organisation," says Gardner.

"There was no need to alter the IT infrastructure at New Lambton, for example," adds Cooksey. "It was more a process of adding extra hardware in to fit in with the existing system."

In addition, the 100MB wireless link between Balance City and New Lambton will also allows the implementation of a complete disaster recovery site. Everyday threats, such as application failure, are managed through the physical and virtual servers.

"Our combination of physical and virtual servers work to safeguard all of Wests' individual networked applications," says Cooksey.

"Now, if one application experiences some kind of error we know the rest of the system won't come to a halt. With so many business functions relying on each other, our system knowledge and experience allows us to deliver this stability" he says.

Outsourcing its IT department to OAS has allowed Wests to utilise the knowledge and experience at a much lower annual cost than hiring IT staff internally.

"We put a lot of trust into OAS and feel safer knowing our computer-based operations are in their experienced hands," says Gardner. "We need to run smoothly on a continual basis, and we do."

Wests has also benefitted from OAS's 24 hour support service. "The 24 hour service has been invaluable," says Gardner. "We rely heavily on computer technology to operate many aspects of the organisation – it really underpins everything we do. If the gaming area experiences a fault at 3am we know we have the backing of a reliable service provider."

"Obviously a lot of attention to detail has been necessary over the years," says Cooksey, "but we've also tried to stay true to the bigger picture. Our role is to provide a solid foundation for the exceptional services and facilities Wests provides to its local community."

TALK TO US TODAY

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