



Law Firm prepares for growth with move to scalable, high-availability infrastructure

BLM

BLM is a leading risk and insurance law firm with head offices in Manchester and London, UK. The firm has a workforce of over 1,600 people, spread over nine offices in the UK and Ireland.

A fast growing law firm, BLM has experienced continual growth over the past 15 years, tripling its workforce as well as nearly doubling the number of offices across the UK. This rapid growth and physical expansion led to an increasingly complex IT infrastructure – and in turn a higher OPEX – needed to run the firm’s key business applications, products and services, as well as the day-to-day office operations of BLM’s lawyers.



The challenge

The key objective for BLM was to move its core infrastructure to a more secure and optimised data centre location, where it could be effectively and securely managed, whilst providing space for rapid expansion.

Darren Broughton, Infrastructure Manager at BLM explained: “As we continued to grow in size, it became clear that our on-premises IT hosting facilities were no longer suitable. We began to experience challenges in simply maintaining the infrastructure. Over the last few years we have several significant outages, generally as a result of power supply or air conditioning failures. It became very clear that we were spending too much time and resource on maintaining our ageing environment.”

Not only was BLM’s IT system held back by costs, but the physical size of the server rooms was also becoming an issue. Additionally, the business was looking at launching a new Document Management System (DMS) which would be used by the entire company. Rather than go through the costly rigmarole of investing in and installing further physical infrastructure the IT department decided to look for a more cost-effective solution:

“We wanted to increase the speed of our system and reduce the administrative burden of setting up new servers and applications for the DMS. We needed IT to be the business enabler, but our old IT infrastructure was a cost drain and not flexible enough for us to help the business to grow,” continued Broughton.

Also important to BLM was the ability to comprehensively protect all its critical applications and data in a flexible and safe environment. The limited physical space at the firm’s offices meant that providing a disaster recovery (DR) environment in-house, whilst also meeting the rapid expansion requirements, was simply not an option.



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The solution

In order to meet BLM's needs, the firm's IT team embarked on a server migration project in partnership with managed services provider Claranet. This saw the firm's critical business applications migrated to a high-availability dedicated environment, built on the VMware platform at Claranet's data centres in Essex and Hertfordshire.

BLM's IT team looked into five managed services providers: "Claranet proved to be the most flexible, offering a design with VMware that was built exactly as per our specification and requirement."

"Having a hands-on team at Claranet took away a lot of the administration of setting up a new environment and because our existing infrastructure was already virtualised, it was very easy to migrate the virtual machines over to the new locations."

Darren Broughton
Infrastructure Manager at **BLM**

Key to the migration process was offering BLM's entire staff access to the newly deployed DMS application, which the firm's lawyers and technical experts rely on for the file sharing and electronic storage of critical documents.

BLM is now running a high availability platform, split between two data centres, with VMware Site Recovery Manager (SRM) playing an integral part in enabling automated failover between the two sites for DR purposes.

Since this migration, both Claranet sites have been added to BLM's network so that the IT team can migrate applications seamlessly from their on-premises platform to their dedicated platform without intervention from Claranet. The virtualisation of servers both at BLM and at Claranet has enabled a smooth integration between the two environments and the scaling required.

The result

By moving its core IT infrastructure to Claranet on VMware, BLM has been able to support business growth while enabling the rapid launch of new business services.

"Previously we would need to spend time monitoring and maintaining our IT environment, but now, we can respond much more quickly to business demands from our lawyers, meaning we're providing a better service to BLM's clients. And when we do need more infrastructure, we can simply request additional memory and storage from Claranet, or spin up new VMware hosts in accordance with business demand, rather than manually installing more servers in our limited on-premise locations.

BLM has also been able to create a formal Disaster Recovery strategy, protecting the workloads and applications in an automated way to ensure a seamless recovery using VMware's SRM component. "With Claranet's help we have developed a hybrid solution between our on-premises site and Claranet's data centres. Adding some legacy hardware and public cloud platforms to our network means our core business applications are now virtually risk-free of outages and centrally managed. This cutting edge capability is delivered from new applications that we can implement quickly and confidently on the platform."



Key services:

- Hosted Voice
- Managed Networks and MPLS

For more information about Claranet's services, and the benefits these deliver, go to: www.claranet.co.uk