Case Study: South West of England RDA

Fully Managed Robust, Secure Hosting Services

The South West of England Regional Development Agency was setup to help improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in the region, helping to make it possible for sustainable business growth and investment, bring new business to the region securing jobs and allowing future communities to thrive.

The Challenge

The South West RDA needed to obtain scalable, reliable Web Hosting Services to enable to communicate with businesses across the world. Web sites are vital tools to reach out in the global environment. Like any government connected agency there are high standards for security – the work they do can both involve highly confidential materials as well as leave them a target for web based attacks and compromise.

The IT challenge was to deliver Hosting Services that were robust, reliable while still flexible to meet the varying needs of each project.

Key Benefits:

◈ Scalable Hosting Platform developed with multi-site redundancy.

◈ VPW's multi-platform approach meant they could support Linux servers as well as Windows platforms in a single contract

◈ New technologies could be leveraged when appropriate – moving from physical dedicated servers to virtualised systems was seamless with VPW.

◈ SWRDA could add and use additional technologies and services within the VPW hosting environment – for security, audit compliance or to enhance services with best of breed service and technologies rather than being restricted to a single vendor solution

> VPW proved to be one of those few suppliers who actually deliver what they say they will deliver once the contract is signed. It was a key business requirement for South West RDA to engage with a local supplier who could deliver a world class solution, for a wide range of business services at an affordable price while still being agile enough to continue to adapt to new business needs, across a wide range of technology platforms.
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> In a highly interconnected environment it is essential to have suppliers who can not only provide technical solutions, but business solutions which help deliver cost reductions and provide a trusted, robust technology platform for other suppliers to deliver their services form, which VPW did time and time again.
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> ADRIAN CORY, HEAD OF ICT
> SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND RDA

How does the VPW Product portfolio help South West of England RDA?

Web Hosting is a vital part of what the South West RDA does as it is a key tool to enable collaboration between stakeholders, communicate with the projects they fund as well as making it possible to promote the region to businesses looking to invest within the region. With a global audience, hosting has to perform well no matter what country you're visiting from, and needs to be robust to cope with sudden, unexpected surges in demand that come as a result of policy changes or press coverage of projects and events.

The hosting solution had to be scalable so it could cope with the unexpected (and often very unpredictable) surges in demand, and it also had to be secure – ensuring confidential data remained so, and potential attacks on its infrastructure were prevented with the systems and services offered protected and kept operational no matter what happened.

SWRDA also wanted to use new technologies to enhance its activities. The marketing team wanted to use new Social Media tools and Blogs, whilst the board wanted to distribute meeting papers. Project teams wanted to make it possible to literally "see" a project develop using Web Cams and live streams. This diverse range of activities meant that the Agency's Hosting Platform had to be flexible, and had to offer a wide range of services.

VPW implemented an integrated hosting solution for the agency, giving them a "single sign on" system for staff, partners and other stakeholders. This meant that you could use a single login and access all of the aspects of a site – and if you later were involved in a second project, the same login was extended again. This reduced the complexity for end users of the sites, and also improved security as it was far easier to remove access in the event someone departed.

The solution also had to offer numerous levels of security. With regular audits of the server platforms, software configurations and services a part of everyday business, security mattered. To make it stronger, VPW provided intrusion prevention systems at its border to protect the solution, which was then supplemented by other equipment and services the agency needed to meet its own security standards. The flexible approach from VPW made it possible to integrate these different systems.

To keep things running, VPW provided Enterprise Backup Services, multiple data-centre hosting redundancy, and a complete disaster recovery solution. Everything was delivered with a comprehensive Service Level Agreement to help manage expectations and ensure standards were kept high.

Finally to ensure that both end users and the core IT teams at the Agency were able to receive adaptive, responsive support, the Agency took advantage of VPWs Managed Support Services including provision of HelpDesk services (phone and e-mail). This enabled end users, suppliers and the agency itself to receive support for any aspect of the hosting services. Out of Hours cover was provided for critical incidents to ensure any sudden, unexpected surge in demand or problems were dealt with quickly, keeping everything running.