

Hostworks delivers a higher quality customer experience with HP

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- Adrian Britton, general manager, Technology, Strategy & Innovation, Hostworks



HOSTWORKS

Objective

Support future growth and stay on top of the technology curve

Approach

Evaluated software solutions for agility, scalability, flexibility and automation in alignment with business direction

IT improvements

- Delivered more powerful solutions with an agile and scalable platform
- Reduced cost and complexity of regulatory compliance
- Tightly aligned service delivery with service excellence to support growth
- Automated manual and time-consuming tasks

Business benefits

- Brought cloud computing solution to market ahead of the competition
- Increased revenue through speedier delivery of new services
- Reduced operational costs through less downtime and operator errors
- Exceeded customer expectation with 100 per cent availability for the SBS 2010 FIFA World Cup Game site
- Achieved good governance and maximised organisational effectiveness

HP customer case study:
HP CloudSystem drives efficiencies and business growth

Industry: Digital Media



Widely regarded as the market leader in solutions for the online and digital media industry in Australia, Hostworks specialises in the provision of high transaction websites, video streaming, complex web hosting and demand management. The company services all the major online and digital media market leaders in Australia including ninemsn, Network TEN, ABC, Prime, Ticketek, Carsales, Seek, realestate.com.au and AHL.

The company employs 100 people across Australia and operates multiple data centres with two core facilities housed in New South Wales and South Australia. Focused on delivering to the rapidly changing demands of the media sector, Hostworks has always and continues to, invest heavily in new technology and services – such as content distribution, cloud-computing, application performance monitoring and automation. This allows the company to ensure its customers have the capacity to meet business demands and consumer expectations.



“Hostworks is committed to delivering a highly flexible service with a low tolerance for downtime,” explains Adrian Britton, Hostworks general manager Technology, Strategy & Innovation. “Staff response time is measured in minutes where we focus on solving problems first and filling out paperwork later. The Hostworks infrastructure is tightly engineered and proven to handle record peak loads and maximum security, using global best practice standards. Ultimately, our reliability and responsiveness results in peace of mind for our customers.”

Automation supports growth and expansion

A few years ago, Hostworks embarked on a Future Service Delivery (FSD) strategy to streamline business processes and gain efficiencies, as well as speed. The company partnered with HP to harness the power of automation and adopted an HP CloudSystem Solution for Service Providers. This integrated software and hardware solution includes HP Cloud Service Automation software (including HP Operations Orchestration), HP Network Automation and a Converged Infrastructure based on HP BladeSystem Matrix with HP ProLiant server blades.

Adrian Britton says, “In order to support future growth and expansion, we realised we needed automation to stay on top of the technology curve. We had addressed our hardware requirements, so we knew software was next. We identified some repetitive tasks in our core business processes that would benefit from being automated, as they weren’t adding any value to our client-facing services. By automating these tasks, we knew we could maximise our resources while increasing the quality and auditability of our processes. More importantly, we knew automation would deliver the flexibility, agility and accountability required to achieve competitive differentiation in the marketplace.

“As a result, we went to market and sought a suite of automation solutions. Given our long-standing relationship with HP on the hardware side and having just implemented the HP BladeSystem Matrix, it made sense for us to assess HP’s other cloud solution software. We settled on the HP Cloud Service Automation software and HP Network Automation Cloud Service, as these proved to be a good fit for our requirements.”

Automation helps bring Elastic Compute Infrastructure to market

One of the unique ways in which Hostworks has benefited from CloudSystem is with the launch and delivery of its cloud computing on-demand platform that supports the requirements of the company’s online and enterprise customers. HP CloudSystem is the world’s first offering that enables clients to build, package and provision cloud services to users through a unified service catalogue. It provides:

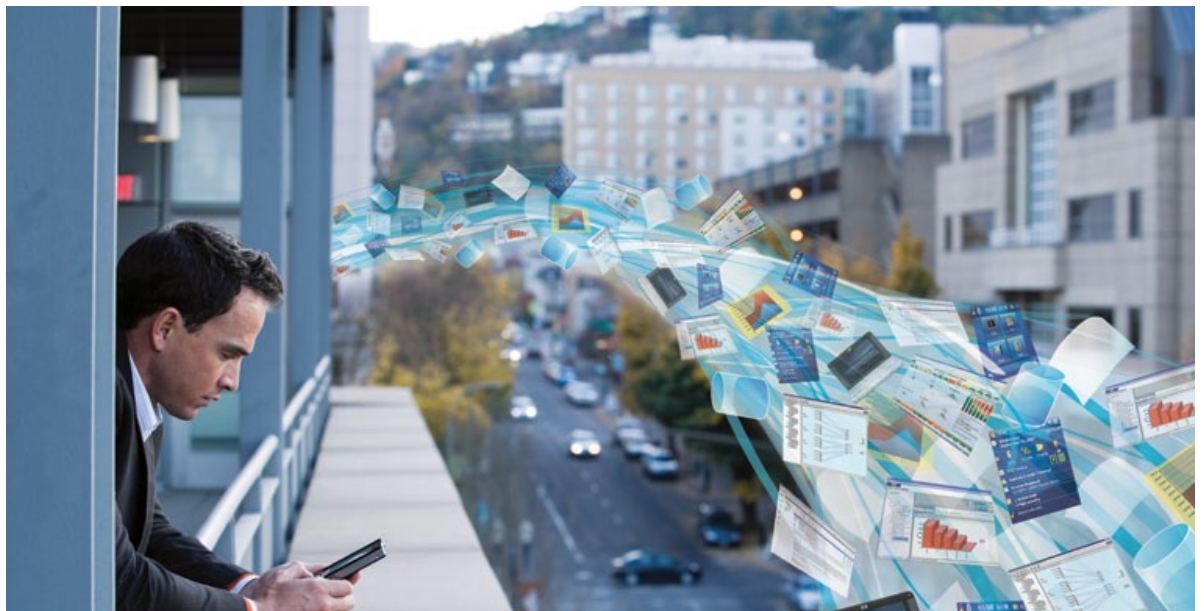
- Single services view across hybrid cloud
- Multi-hypervisor, multi-OS, heterogeneous infrastructure
- Intelligent automation and orchestration
- Rapid application and infrastructure deployment

Adrian Britton explains, “Traditionally large online platforms are delivered through a farm of dedicated hardware, which can be time consuming to deploy, very expensive and offer limited capacity. To counter these barriers, we created a cost-effective solution called Elastic Compute Infrastructure that can rapidly scale up and down without affecting resources. By leveraging HP CloudSystem, Elastic negates the need for capital outlay, as the customer pays only for what they use.

“HP enabled us to bring our Elastic product to market. A large part of its functionality is powered by HP CloudSystem. Importantly, it integrates everything we needed under the one platform.

“Elastic caters for unprecedented demand for hosting by having the ability to rapidly deploy additional environments as demand grows and scale back as needed. The HP solution helps us automate much of the system management and keep tight control of the computing environment.

“Our first Elastic customer was the broadcaster SBS, who asked us to underpin its hosting platform for the delivery of the World Game site in association with the 2010 FIFA World Cup. At the time, SBS was unsure of the predicted traffic to the site, which tracks matches, provides up-to-the-minute news and information on results and games. Elastic Compute Infrastructure was a cost-effective solution. It provided 100 per cent availability for the World Game site – catering for 1.5 million unique visitors, recording 25-30 million page impressions and 2 million video views.”



Standardising operations and meeting compliance

Enforcing standard processes and bringing servers/networks into compliance with regulatory standards was once a labour-intensive and complex task at Hostworks. Today, HP Operations Orchestration automates incident resolution, change orchestration and routine maintenance tasks that are standardised and documented in a manner that meets industry regulations and leaves an auditable trail. HP Network Automation also helps meet compliance standards through a network compliance model that maps device information, including configurations and run-time diagnostics, as well as policies and user roles. And on the server side, HP Server Automation facilitates the creation, sharing and enforcement of policies across distributed environments.

“The media industry carries significant regulations that we have to comply with,” explains Adrian Britton. “HP provides a compliance model across its automation solutions that enables us to map server, operation and network information into a normalised structure that promotes compliance. It also gives us the visibility and control we need over globally distributed elements of our infrastructure so we can be notified of planned, unplanned or unauthorised changes.

“Another benefit of having such a high level of auditability is that we have good governance. It means we can trace any transaction or task and can ensure that critical data is automatically captured and communicated. For our customers, this means peace of mind, because the risk of downtime or operator errors is reduced, as our processes are standardised, automated and auditable.”

Delivering service excellence, agility and revenue

Adrian Britton says, “By far the most important benefit achieved by implementing HP software is service excellence.

“Our whole company lives and breathes Service Level Agreements (SLAs),” adds Adrian Britton. “However, we find that there are varied definitions of SLAs in the industry. We define ours very clearly and very precisely – it’s what we’re known for. We don’t measure the actual availability of the technology or the system per se – we measure it in terms of the user experience, which we believe is far more important. That way, we can align Hostworks’ service delivery with service excellence at the user level.

“Of course, service excellence is also one of the outcomes of having great agility. HP allows us to be agile and able to complete complex tasks quickly,

aided by automation. This results in our customers being delighted, which means we're improving customer satisfaction. Quite simply, we pride ourselves on our ability to service customer requirements rapidly.

"The other outcome of possessing great agility is that we can provision services very quickly to satisfy customer requirements. Revenue is obviously aligned with service delivery. As a result, HP allows us to improve our opportunity to drive revenue, while at the same time reducing back-end costs, maintaining cost-effectiveness and increasing profitability."

Leasing maximises IT budget

Hostworks has always invested in new technology and services to ensure its customers have the greatest ability to meet business demands. To fund this approach, the company has been leasing HP software through HP Financial Services since 2000.

Adrian Britton says, "The main reason we chose to lease HP software is to more closely align our technology expenses with monthly revenue streams. It also allows us to spread the cost of the technology over its useful life. Plus, at the end, we can replace the technology with the latest solutions by simply continuing the lease.

"In this instance, it was natural for us to lease HP CloudSystem, so we could continue financing our growth, while conserving our cash flow."

Future outlook

HP solutions will continue to play a key role as the service automation backbone of Hostworks' IT operations.

Customer solution at a glance:

Primary applications

- Integrated CloudSystem solution including hardware and software

Primary hardware

- HP BladeSystem Matrix consisting of HP BladeSystem and the Matrix Operating Environment management software

Primary software

- Matrix Operating Environment delivered through Insight Dynamics
- HP Cloud Service Automation software: HP Operations Orchestration and HP Server Automation
- HP Network Automation software

HP Services

- HP Financial Services

"Our partnership with HP hardware and software has been hugely successful for Hostworks. It provides simplicity, agility, auditability, repeatability and scalability. This translates into the delivery of high quality products and high quality services with minimal IT operational costs," says Adrian Britton.

"As we continue to strive for business in the digital media space, we are pushing the boundaries of what's possible from a technology perspective. HP is a key partner in our growth and evolution strategy."

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