

//Centralising business critical IT

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IT Solutions and Services

Valspar makes significant gains by rationalising its server and storage estate with a virtualisation solution from Richardson Eyres and HP.

The Valspar Corporation is one of the largest global coatings manufacturers in the world, providing coatings and coating intermediates to a wide variety of customers. Since 1806, Valspar has been dedicated to bringing customers the latest innovations, the finest quality, and the best customer service in the coatings industry. The company has more than 9,500 employees in over 25 countries and a turnover in excess of \$3 billion.

Growth by acquisition

With the market for coatings mature, Valspar's growth strategy is based on acquisition. And it has been highly successful, growing six-fold in the last ten years. However, as Valspar was acquiring companies' products and customers, it was also acquiring the associated IT infrastructure, as John Reeve, IS Director – Europe, Valspar Corporation, explains.

““ We were constantly picking up sites and servers all over Europe,” says John. “It meant we had a huge overhead from the cost of the hardware and software, as well as maintenance and back ups. We knew we had to adopt a different approach. ””

John Reeve, IS Director - Europe, Valspar Corporation

Consolidating as many resources as possible into a single data centre was the obvious answer, but John was worried about application performance over a Wide Area Network (WAN), so he started looking at enabling technologies. A white paper led him to look at Riverbed devices, which accelerate application performance on WANs.

“Riverbed lent us two devices,” says John. “We moved the servers from two of our UK sites that had particularly demanding users and connected them remotely. The users told us there was no difference in performance, which convinced us that it was possible to give users access to the applications they needed from a central location.”

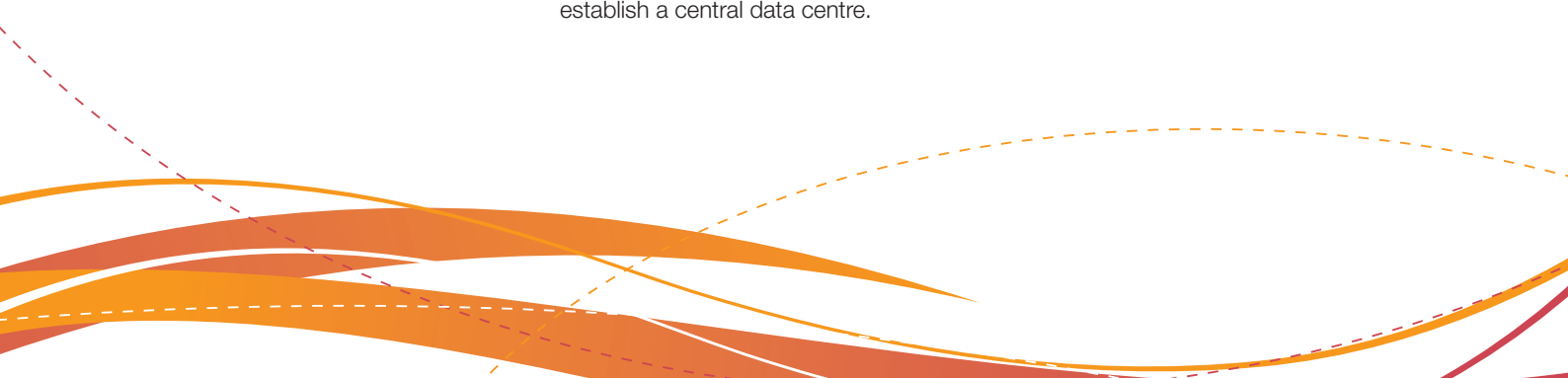
The next step was to look at the other technologies that would be needed to establish a central data centre.

Competitive tender

Valspar reviewed the technologies that were available with a number of companies including Richardson Eyres, who were introduced by Riverbed. As Valspar had already standardised on HP infrastructure, and was very happy with the quality of its products and support, it was natural to look at HP servers and storage.

Richardson Eyres, an HP Authorised Business Solution Partner, provided technical resources to help Valspar define its requirements. The company also helped Valspar undertake a proof of concept by loaning HP hardware and virtualising part of its environment using VMware.

With server virtualisation and an HP SAN being the chosen solution, Valspar developed detailed specifications and put them out to tender. After careful consideration Valspar selected Richardson Eyres to supply the solution. “Richardson Eyres were prepared to spend a lot of time helping us to define the final solution we needed,” says John, explaining why Richardson Eyres were chosen. “As a result, we were extremely confident in the technical ability of its experts. The proposal Richardson Eyres put forward was also cost competitive.”



“ Having a virtualised environment means we have been able to retire approximately 30 physical servers and haven't needed to buy more. I estimate we've saved at least £50,000 and, when we're finished, that could be £100,000, perhaps more. ”

John Reeve, European IS Director - Europe, Valspar Corporation

Phased approach

Valspar wanted to make sure the Riverbed devices were in place first, so it sourced and implemented these separately. While it did so Richardson Eyres began building the HP servers and HP SAN into the rack. This was initially done at Richardson Eyres Build Centre before its experts went on site to install the HP servers and VMware and configure the HP SAN. The whole onsite effort took just 3-4 days.

Since then Valspar has migrated three sites to the new HP infrastructure and is planning more over the coming months. “There were no particular benefits in adopting a ‘big bang’ implementation approach,” says John, “and the risks were much higher. So we are taking a phased approach. Also, we wanted to ensure our disaster recovery site was operational before we went too far.”

Significant benefits

To date Valspar has 45 virtual servers running on seven physical HP blade servers and has already seen major benefits. “The environment is much easier to maintain, which has freed up resources to focus on activities that add more value to the business,” says John. “We're using less power and the ability to take a virtual machine and run it on any server, together with functions like snapshots, are extremely attractive from a business continuity point of view.”

From a cost avoidance perspective the solution has also been very successful. “Having a virtualised environment means we have been able to retire approximately 30 physical servers and haven't needed to buy more,” explains John. “I estimate we've saved at least £50,000 and, when we're finished, that could be £100,000, perhaps more.”

Backup is also considerably easier. “Before we were managing hundreds of back up tapes and had numerous backup devices. With the HP MSL tape library we've probably saved £40,000-50,000 on those devices,” says John. “In addition, without the Riverbed devices, we probably would need around 2.5 times the bandwidth we have. Projecting that over three years means we would have had to spend about \$2 million more without them.”

Future plans

Aside from increasing the number of sites that are serviced from the central data centre, Valspar also intends to expand the capabilities of its disaster recovery centre. “We would like to bring our second site up to the same standard as the main data centre,” says John. “By doing so we will be able to load balance between the two, giving us greater flexibility.”

Commenting on the part Richardson Eyres played in helping Valspar deploy its new data centre solution, John says: “Even though they were a new supplier, Richardson Eyres were not pushy during the sales process. They were prepared to provide the necessary technical resources, which other companies were not.”

“When it came to the implementation, Richardson Eyres did exactly what they said they would do,” John continues.

“Its technical people were very knowledgeable. They were always helpful and provided a very good service.”

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John Reeve, IS Director - Europe,
Valspar Corporation

Challenge

- Rationalise a sprawling server and storage estate accumulated as a result of multiple company acquisitions.

Solution

- HP BladeSystem c-Class Blade Servers
- HP StorageWorks 4000 Enterprise Virtual Array
- HP EVA SAN switches
- VMware Enterprise Edition and Virtual Centre software
- HP MSA Storage System
- HP MSL 6030 SAN-attached Tape Library
- Richardson Eyres Consulting Services to install and configure
- Riverbed WAN acceleration devices

Results

- Reduced maintenance
- Reduced power requirements
- Cost avoidance of £50-100k through reduced server purchasing and retirement
- £40-50k saving in backup devices
- Improved business continuity
- \$2 million in bandwidth savings

// Richardson Eyres provides solutions for data centre consolidation. It works with its customers to streamline IT infrastructures, freeing up time, resources and ultimately saving its customers' money.

Richardson Eyres develops long-term and mutually beneficial relationships working with its customers to ensure that it provides bespoke solutions to help their business run efficiently, effectively and above all, profitably.

Richardson Eyres

Unit 12 Alma Road Trading Estate
Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 3HB
t +44 (0) 1494 792 002
f +44 (0) 1494 791 882

It has partnerships with HP and VMware, and is one of a small number of HP Professional Services Partners (PSP) in the UK. It also provides solutions for companies globally, from their offices in the UK and the US.

With over 20 years experience as a data centre consultant, Richardson Eyres has extensive technical knowledge and the know-how to apply this knowledge to help organisations run their IT infrastructures more efficiently. Established in 1986, the company is privately owned and its headquarters is in Chesham, Buckinghamshire.

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