



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

YPO

Phoenix designs a single-vendor, high-performance virtualised IT infrastructure to give YPO the capacity and capability to determine its own solution and future architectural approach

YPO is one of the largest public sector buying organisations in the UK, supplying over 30,000 products and 100 frameworks to a wide range of customers including schools, local authorities, charities, emergency services, public sector and other businesses such as nurseries and care homes.

CHALLENGE

YPO proactively monitors its IT infrastructure and technology estate, to not only maintain resilience and stability, but to also ensure it has the ability to serve its current customers as well as the future capacity to meet its ambitious growth goals. Kevin Field, YPO's IT Manager is always keen to explore the very latest technology solutions available to achieve the best solution at the right cost, and values both his internal team's knowledge and external expertise when reaching any decision.

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge

YPO needed to refresh its aging IT infrastructure and assess whether further investment in its on-premises infrastructure and the continuation of a hybrid solution was the right approach, or whether a full migration to the cloud was a viable option.

Solution

After undertaking a Cloud Readiness Assessment for YPO, Phoenix designed a single-vendor, high-performance virtualised IT infrastructure which gave YPO the capacity and capability to determine its own solution and future architectural approach.

Benefits

YPO now has a high-performance, scalable and secure IT platform, with proven disaster recovery and enhanced resilience.

“We engaged Phoenix and other suppliers throughout a lengthy assessment and options process, which resulted in Phoenix being the partner of choice once again.”

Kevin Field
IT Manager, YPO

Kevin commented, “Phoenix has supported YPO on many technology initiatives for over 15 years – including the implementation of our most recent hardware refresh, which saw the company migrate from a traditional to a virtualised data centre in 2013. With the virtualised infrastructure naturally reaching the end of its useful life, we engaged Phoenix and other suppliers throughout a lengthy assessment and options process, which resulted in Phoenix being the partner of choice once again.”

Given the growing prevalence of cloud computing since the last hardware refresh, Kevin was particularly keen to see if YPO's current systems could utilise the numerous flexibility, agility and cost-efficiency benefits of such an infrastructure. At the same time, YPO had some broader business goals that IT needed to support:

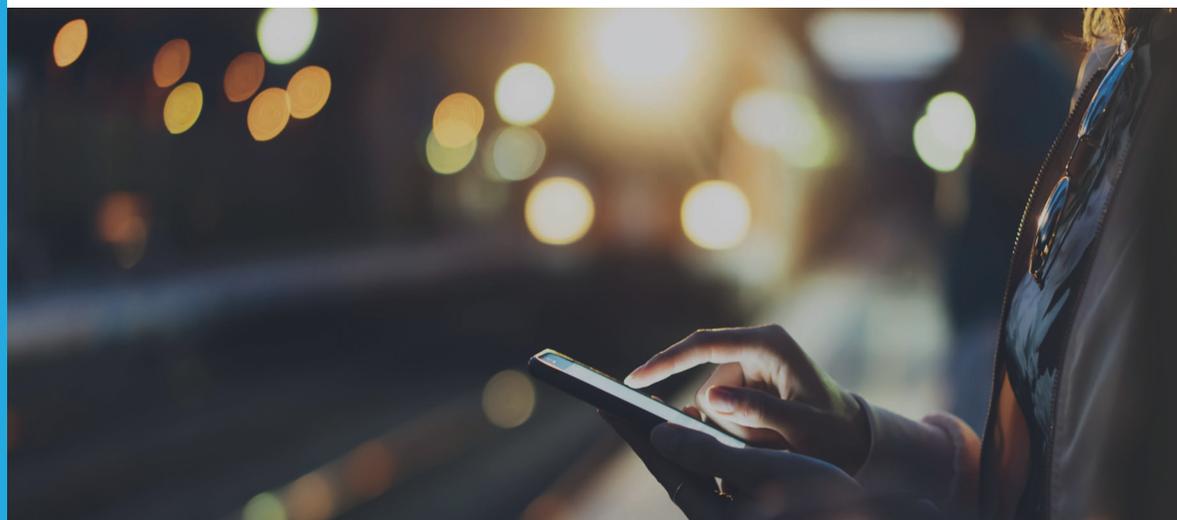
- **Introduce IT capabilities** across core systems to enable a broader 24-hour service offering, should this be required in the future.
- **Further enhance** their disaster recovery and business continuity operating capabilities to reduce the risk to service delivery, mitigate against system loss and maintain customer service level expectations.
- **Reduce IT technical management time:** Although their existing infrastructure was best-of-breed when implemented and had provided the best experience for end-users, it had become more difficult to manage. Kevin was keen to adopt a more “light touch” infrastructure and reduce the requirement for internal resource activities where possible.
- **Improve security:** Given the ever-growing security threats facing organisations of all sizes, it was important to have the strongest security available on the market today.

More broadly, the overall objective of the project was to support YPO's business objectives to move into new markets without compromising its existing commitments with its existing national customers. With such ambitious growth plans, the new IT solution needed to be agile enough to react quickly to any changes in the business as it grew.

SOLUTION

YPO's existing infrastructure consisted of a range of HP servers and switches, VMware, Veeam and Netapp SANs in both a live and a mirrored disaster recovery scenario. Since YPO was keen to explore the options for migrating its infrastructure to the cloud, the project began with a feasibility study to assess the cloud readiness of its current applications.

The feasibility study commenced in late 2017, with its outcome presented to YPO in March 2018. The study determined that given the critical nature and age of some of YPO's legacy applications – some of which were 20-30 years' old – a cloud strategy would not be the most cost-effective solution at this time and would present unnecessary risk to the business for relatively little gain. Phoenix therefore proposed an on-premise design for YPO's core legacy applications, while designing it with the capability, once some of the legacy systems had been decommissioned or replaced, to investigate leveraging the cloud at a later date.



"Phoenix deployed the new hardware in two separate two-week sprints, with the VMware virtual machines migrated over several days and tested on completion. This ensured a seamless transition with no impact on service delivery."

Kevin Field
IT Manager, YPO

The new design would replace all of YPO's existing core infrastructure, including backup Veeam servers, live and disaster recovery SANs and switches. Taking account of YPO's desire for a light touch infrastructure, Phoenix designed the new solution around a single hardware vendor. This would not only simplify the deployment phase, but it would also significantly reduce the day-to-day management overhead while also improving vendor support during the lifetime of the hardware. After reviewing the market, Phoenix recommended Dell as the vendor of choice for YPO's needs due to its cost-effectiveness against the competition and proven expertise in reliable datacentre infrastructure. The new solution was based on Dell servers (virtualised with VMware vSphere), Dell 10Gb switches and an all-flash SAN incorporating 18 x 3.84TB 12Gbps SSD drives for maximum performance.

"Due to YPO's high number of school customers and main peak operating months, the new solution could not be implemented between the months of March to September or as a single implementation activity. A phased installation was therefore necessary. Phoenix deployed the new hardware in two separate two-week sprints, with the VMware virtual machines migrated over several days and tested on completion. This ensured a seamless transition with no impact on service delivery," commented Kevin.

BENEFITS

Low touch Management

Reducing the number of vendors to as few as possible has delivered the efficiencies YPO were looking for. Since Dell and VMware are now part of the same organisation, the integration between the physical hardware and virtualisation technology is only going to improve even further as the two companies share their technologies

Cloud Savings

As part of the cloud feasibility study, Phoenix were able to identify some improvement areas and after some engagement activities, help YPO reduce some of their hosting costs for other parts of the YPO digital architecture hosted in the cloud.

Cloud Ready

While it was determined that migrating YPO's legacy applications to a cloud service would not be beneficial today, the new infrastructure has been designed with its hybrid solution goals in mind and are now fully informed on which applications could be migrated in time, and those which would need to be retired or replaced with cloud-native alternatives.

24-Hour Delivery

With an efficient virtualised infrastructure and a potential roadmap to the cloud, YPO can better support 24-hour service delivery or operational change requirements if required.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

To find out how we can help you transform any aspect of your IT estate contact the Phoenix Team now on:

01904 562200

hello@phoenixs.co.uk