



At a Glance

Company: International Rugby Board
Industry: Sporting Organisation

Customer Profile

Founded in 1886 and headquartered in Dublin, the International Rugby Board (IRB) is the world governing and law-making body for the Game of Rugby Union. The IRB has several functions including governance, global game development and game promotion.

Business Challenge

To design and implement a scalable and resilient IT architecture, encompassing a virtualised server/storage infrastructure in time for Rugby World Cup 2011.

Solution

- Overall LAN architecture design to encompass virtualised server and storage infrastructure based on HP technology.
- Consolidation of server farm from 13 servers to two using VMware Essentials Plus.
- 1 x HP MSA 2000 Dual I/O chassis with 5 x 2TB SATA drives
- 1 x HP P2000 iSCSI dual channel controller with 15 x 600GB SAS drives
- 2 x HP ProCurve 2810G
- Powered by 2 x HP DL380 G7 Host Servers with 2 x Quad core CPUs

Benefits

- Reduction in space requirements for IT infrastructure, down to one rack in comms room.
- Less server power consumption and lower energy costs.
- Greater network redundancy with no single point of failure.
- Seamless testing of systems and new applications without need to configure separate servers and without interruption to network services.
- Reduction in IT administration time with fewer servers to manage.

International Rugby Board Converts to MJ Flood Technology

Refreshed virtualised server and storage infrastructure provides continuous, uninterrupted operations for Rugby World Cup

Record global TV audiences ensured the recent Rugby World Cup (RWC) was another triumph for the International Rugby Board (IRB). The provision of continuous, uninterrupted IT services to support this global rugby fest, comprising 20 teams playing 48 matches over a six-week period, was instrumental in that success.

Thanks to a refreshed virtualised and storage infrastructure designed and deployed by MJ Flood Technology, the IRB can provide resilient, scalable and flexible IT services, which specifically cater for the unique requirements of this global sporting organisation.

“The Dublin network was a critical component in the flow of data to our website in terms of statistics and results,” explains John Corbett, IT manager with the IRB. “The network was very busy during the Rugby World Cup and had to cater for additional staff on the ground in New Zealand, months before the tournament even started. Thankfully, we had very few teething problems with the solution and the migration was seamless. Everything was stable and worked as expected.”

Mission Critical Network

The IRB had looked at the possibility of virtualisation over the years. With 14 servers, it was a technology, which was always going to deliver real benefits to the organisation. However, with a demanding project pipeline, the lull in business activity before the RWC offered the perfect opportunity to upgrade the infrastructure.

“In any World Cup year, we would always have to increase our infrastructure to support temporary file storage or temporary mailboxes for additional staff,” according to Corbett. “The mailbox count alone was up by over 50 per cent and these accounts were typically used by website editorial staff to exchange rich content of video and audio files.”

The IRB’s mission-critical application is a data feed which provides statistics and results. The statistical feed gathers data from multiple sources, packages it into XML files and pushes it across the network from Dublin to various sources including the IRB website and other agencies, who have paid to take the service on a per tournament basis. Resiliency and maximum uptime, therefore were critical for the continuous and uninterrupted flow of tournament-related information around the world.



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Customer Case Study

Sport

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John Corbett, IT manager with the IRB.

A Resilient and Practical Solution

“We recommended an HP technology platform as we felt it offered the best price-performance solution for the IRB’s unique requirements,” according to David Flood, senior IT solutions consultant with MJ Flood Technology. “Computing needs are handled by 2 x HP DL380 G7 servers running VMware for virtualisation and provide the high speed, high performance required by the IRB for their mission-critical traffic. An HP P2000 iSCSI SAN array coupled with HP switching technology forms the core of the network and delivers the scalability and resilience which underpins the network design,” he adds.

Virtualisation allowed the IRB to reduce the number of servers from 14 to two, delivering a host of benefits to the sporting organisation. “Firstly, we have cut down on the amount of physical space used in our computer room,” says John Corbett. “Secondly, we’ve significantly reduced our server power consumption with more redundancy that we ever had with physical boxes. Finally, we can also fire up new servers for testing systems and applications and that’s much easier to do on a virtualised system rather than configuring physical boxes,” he adds.

Match Analysis and Statistical Deep Dive

In parallel to the primary SAN array for “live” production data, the IRB also had a specific requirement for cheaper storage, which would accommodate their video analysis files. An HP MSA 2000 chassis with 5 x 2 TB SATA drives provided the ideal solution as Corbett explains. “This system stores an archive of all IRB matches, allowing our Game Analysis Unit to access video files and use their game analysis software to provide granular detail on each match.

In choosing an IT service provider, the IRB went out to tender and originally considered proposals from four organisations to complete the project. “Given our experience and tender review sessions with a number of technical specialists in MJ Flood Technology, we felt they were the best fit to do the job for us,” explains Corbett. “Their technical expertise was solid and the team made us very comfortable that they could deliver the solution for us, within the aggressive timescales required by the project.”

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