

NEW PAYROLL & HR SYSTEM FOR LONDON COUNCIL

Success Stories

BSi

BUSINESS SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL

Hammersmith and Fulham Council looks to increased efficiency with BSI and Sun

Located close to the heart of London, Hammersmith and Fulham enjoys a wide cultural diversity of people and communities and continues to be successful in attracting an increasing number of major companies – as well as offering an enviable choice of arts and entertainments venues, playing host to three professional football clubs and having several notable landmarks.

In recent years, the Council has undergone a major programme of reform – modernising its decision-making process to make it more open and understandable, and introducing a number of new initiatives to enable greater public participation. To facilitate the delivery of high quality services, the Council's modernisation programme has included a number of projects to upgrade its in-house IT systems, in order to improve communication both internally and externally, thus helping the Council to serve the local community more efficiently.

“Meeting our needs for the next 5 years...”

One of these IT upgrade projects has focused on replacing the Council's previous payroll and Human Resources (HR) systems, with a new infrastructure solution designed, configured and implemented by Business Systems International (BSI) – a Sun Microsystems™ reseller and expert in the delivery of robust, high performance solutions. The new system replaces two independent payroll and HR systems with a Sun Fire™ V880 server and a Sun Fire 280R server, running in a two-tier configuration to deliver both an Oracle database and a combined HR Management and Payroll application. The aim of the new solution is to improve the productivity of Council personnel through the provision of state-of-the-art applications that are easy to use, and which – thanks to the very latest Sun™ hardware technology – enable a much faster workflow and are highly available.

“We needed to replace our old systems as they were unable to cope with the increasing number of users, and were too slow to enable staff to process vital business functions efficiently,” explains Eleanor Yates, Project Manager, Hammersmith and Fulham Council. “Our aim was to replace the two systems with a single solution, and to have one server running one application, that was capable of meeting our needs for the next 5 years. We needed a solution that a) we could scale-up quickly and cost-effectively to accommodate future growth, b) we could easily add more functionality to, and c) would deliver the highest levels of availability and reliability.”

BSI excels at adding value

Hammersmith and Fulham Council had already chosen to replace its former payroll and HR applications with 'Trent' – a combined package from Midland Software that provides

Industry:

- Public Sector

Applications:

- Trent HR Management and Payroll system from Midland Software

Hardware/Software:

- Sun Fire™ V880 database server
- Sun Fire 280R applications server
- Sun StorEdge™T3 storage array
- Sun Solaris™ 8 operating environment



Key Business Results:

- As a result of the new solution, the council anticipates a significant improvement both in staff productivity, and in the speed and efficiency with which business functions are processed, thus improving communications both internally and externally
- Users will benefit from greater system availability, faster processing times and reduced downtime
- The new applications system is much easier to use, thus helping to improve staff efficiency
- BSI offers a range of added-value services to provide customers with a complete end-to-end service
- Thanks to the Sun Fire V880's high processing speed, the Council anticipates that tasks, such as processing the payroll, will take significantly less time
- The new solution can be easily expanded, thus providing for cost-effective, future growth
- Sun's systems provide high levels of reliability – therefore enabling the Council to save on maintenance and management costs
- Sun's hardware offers a lot of built-in redundancy, helping to minimise downtime considerably

specialised functionality, tailored to the needs of local authorities. And, as the Council had been a Sun user for many years, with several Sun servers already on site, it chose to stay on the Sun platform, and to engage BSI to implement the solution.

"We wanted an implementation partner with the capability to provide more than just the physical hardware," continues Eleanor Yates. "In our experience, many hardware suppliers are just that – they will procure the equipment, but they have no interest in helping you to develop the optimum solution for your particular requirements. In contrast, BSI excels at adding value, and provides a range of specialist services, including consultancy, project management, system configuration, installation and support, in order to provide their customers with a complete end-to-end service."

"Prior to BSI's engagement, we had already defined a hardware configuration, but following our initial discussions with BSI, they advised us that this proposed solution would not meet our requirements. So, together, we reviewed our plans. We discussed our key requirements, such as the expected number of users, the expected memory size, storage needs and anticipated future growth – and, following further discussions with both Midland Software and Sun, BSI recommended an alternative solution."

Two-tier solution for Scalability, Flexibility and Resilience

BSI proposed a two-tier solution, with a powerful Sun Fire V880 as the database server, and a Sun Fire 280R as the application server – both underpinned by the robust Solaris™ operating environment – with a StorEdge™ T3 storage array. The key benefits of a two-tier solution are scalability, flexibility and resilience. The capacity of the V880 can easily be increased by adding more processors, and the applications layer can be expanded horizontally – for load balancing or the delivery of additional applications – with additional 280Rs, thus providing for cost-effective, future growth.

"In addition to the system's scalability, we were also impressed with its high levels of resilience," comments Eleanor. "The hardware offers a lot of built-in redundancy, in terms of power supply, network connectivity and multiple boot disks, which helps to minimise downtime. We know from experience that Sun's equipment has a Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF) that is significantly better than many alternative hardware systems, and we have certainly benefited from the highest levels of uptime from all of our Sun servers. Although we don't necessarily need 24x7 accessibility, we do need reliability and high availability. For example, it would create enormous problems for us to reach a payroll date and find that the system was down."

"Sun's high levels of reliability also enable us to save on maintenance and management costs. And because Sun's systems are so resilient, the need for an expensive disaster recovery system is reduced – which is another important cost consideration for the Council. We don't anticipate that the live

servers will ever go down, but if they did, then we have the reassurance of SunSpectrum™ Platinum level support. We know we can rely on a very quick turnaround from Sun. If a piece of equipment should fail, Sun always has the equipment up and running again very quickly.

Improving staff efficiency

"And thanks to the latest UltraSPARC™ III technology, the new solution is much more powerful than our previous systems. The processing speed is significantly higher, and we're anticipating that tasks, such as processing the payroll, will take far less time than previously."

The new solution will initially support 130 users, with approximately 80 concurrent users, and has the capability to expand easily to up to 500 users. As well as benefiting from greater system availability, faster processing times and reduced downtime, users will also benefit from the enhanced functionality of the new applications package. Whereas the previous applications were text-based, the new system takes full advantage of the familiar standard Windows system, with clear, easy to understand screen layouts – making the applications much easier to use, and thus helping to improve staff efficiency.

The future looks bright – with BSI and Sun

"One of our main aims was to implement a solution that will meet our needs for the next 5 years," concludes Eleanor. "When we engaged BSI, we held several discussions about where we'll be in 3-5 years time, rather than just focusing on short-term needs, and we have every confidence that the V880 solution will fit the bill perfectly. The V880 can be expanded to 8 processors, and we can also expand the system by adding extra 280Rs, so there's a lot of room for growth in many different ways."

"The system has been installed, and although it doesn't go live until later this year, I firmly believe we've met our objectives. We've devoted a lot of time to checking the system to ensure that it'll meet our needs – and I believe there's no doubt that it will. We expect to see a definite improvement both in staff productivity, and in the speed and efficiency with which business functions are processed, thus improving communications both internally and externally. We've got a very positive feeling about the solution that BSI has provided. The whole relationship feels very good, very positive, and we anticipate a long and successful future with both BSI and Sun."



For further information visit www.e-business.com or call 020 7352 7007



BUSINESS SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL