DELL EMC

(intel®)

Improving digital services for citizens

Middlesbrough Council creates a hyperconverged IT infrastructure to enhance public services and enable innovation with limited resources

Middlesbrough moving forward

Local Government | United Kingdom

Organisation needs

As its managed services contract came to an end, Middlesbrough Council's IT team took the opportunity to introduce modern technology and improve the performance, reliability and efficiency of IT services in serving the council and the public.

Solutions at a glance

- Dell EMC vSAN Ready Nodes
- Dell EMC PowerEdge servers
- Dell PowerVault TL4000 tape library
- Dell EMC OpenManage Enterprise
- Dell EMC ProSupport Enterprise

Organisation results

- Frees up engineers to support innovative council initiatives

- Enhances backup performance, reduces backup times by 30% and eliminates application slowdowns

- Improves citizens' access to digital resources

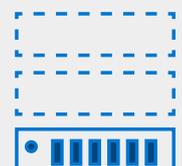- Enables user productivity with anytime, anywhere system access

80K
Saved on a hyperconverged platform

Reduces
rack space requirements by two-thirds

Middlesbrough, a city of close to 184,000 people in north-east England, is quickly becoming an innovation hub, attracting startups and digital talent. Middlesbrough Council plays an integral role in the city's digital transformation and aims to take advantage of technology that can enhance the delivery of services to internal clients and the public. With funding for local authorities becoming more restrictive, the council's IT department has to manage more than 300 applications and support the work of the council with increasingly constrained resources.

Recent organisational changes coupled with servers and hardware nearing end of life provided the IT team with the perfect opportunity to review a managed services contract that had been in place for more than a decade. Andy Evans, head of ICT services for Middlesbrough Council, says, "Our ageing infrastructure was made up of products from numerous vendors, and our service provider offered only basic break/fix support. We could no longer deliver the application performance users required. We also wanted to implement disaster recovery with faster backups and a second data centre."

Evans and his IT team, along with their IT partner Phoenix Software, evaluated different solutions to establish which would be the best fit for Middlesbrough Council. "Phoenix Software consultants had helped us on a number of projects, and we asked them for advice on the next step of our IT evolution," Evans says. "We already knew and liked Dell EMC and VMware, so Phoenix Software organised a workshop with both providers. This showed us how a hyperconverged infrastructure of Dell EMC servers running on VMware would work, and it soon became clear that the solution ticked all our boxes: scalability, performance and resilience."

Rapid vSAN deployment

The imminent end of the current services contract meant the timeline was tight to roll out a new solution. Together with Dell EMC, VMware and Phoenix Software, Evans and his team completed the implementation in less than three months. They replaced hardware from several suppliers with a Dell EMC vSAN solution comprising 24 Dell EMC PowerEdge rack servers, as well as two Dell PowerVault TL4000 tape libraries to support backups. At the end of the project, the second data centre went live with pre-configured technology. "The speed and ease of our deployment justified our confidence in Dell EMC," says Evans. "We worked closely with Phoenix Software and migrated numerous applications during the business day without any disruption to users."

Roadmap for digital evolution

In collaboration with Dell EMC, Middlesbrough Council IT drafted a roadmap that allows incremental upgrades instead of costly, comprehensive technology replacements. "We're saving close to £80,000 on a Dell EMC hyperconverged platform that can grow with us and relies on hardware from just one vendor," says Evans. "Our Dell EMC hyperconverged platform helps us speed up citizen access to council resources. We can provide the right resources for applications at the best time based on our business needs, rather than focus our resources on managing infrastructure."

The council's partner for architecture, planning, deployment and support is instrumental in this effort. Evans says, "Phoenix Software helped us create a transformative technology platform without disruption. Whenever we want to forestall any issues or better understand how to achieve the best outcomes from the Dell EMC solutions, they are there for us, sharing their insight."

Bigger IT impact

IT efficiency has significantly increased. Evans comments, "We have freed valuable engineering time by using Dell EMC OpenManage. Now, we can focus on delivering other priorities and innovative solutions. By simplifying technology lifecycle management and automating IT tasks, we can improve efficiency, accommodate increasing workloads and support important council initiatives."

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Middlesbrough Council

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>
> Andy Evans, Head of ICT Services, Middlesbrough Council

The vSAN also uses minimal data centre rack space. "Instead of three physical racks, we use just one rack in the Dell EMC hyperconverged environment," says Evans. "We can extend our services and generate revenue by offering hosting to other public agencies."

Ensuring application availability

With the Dell EMC solution in place, the council has enhanced data protection. "With instant replication, we can guarantee availability not just of the most critical systems, but of all the 300-plus applications used by the council," says Evans. "We have improved backup performance and reduced backup times by nearly 30 percent. Users no longer complain that backups are absorbing computing power."

Evans emphasises that Dell EMC hardware used at Middlesbrough has a long history of running flawlessly. "We have not experienced any issues with the Dell EMC hosts," he adds. "This, along with our great relationship with Phoenix Software, means that we haven't had to call on the Dell EMC ProSupport Enterprise service yet. But it's comforting to know it's there if we need it."

As was proved during a winter storm, any number of council users can dependably access their cloud-based or on-premises systems from anywhere with an internet connection. Evans says, "We can enable a more flexible, consistent and productive user experience and working culture on the Dell EMC vSAN."

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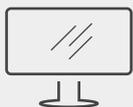
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