

Christchurch City Council

South Island's largest IT infrastructure outsource project



“We chose Clarus to help drive the project because they were the best... they are an organisation that we trust and respect”

THE ISSUE

Christchurch City Council (CCC) needed to relocate and upgrade its data centre. It was operating a mix of 250 physical and virtual individual servers with 2800 users in an aging facility and was looking to improve its operational capability, future proof its infrastructure and cut costs. Clarus (Clarus was acquired by Assurity in December 2012) was approached by the CCC to manage the project, including preparing the business case, RFI and RFP to find a suitable partner to host the data centre and deliver a scalable solution with all the infrastructure support included. It required increased digital storage, 24/7 online services and the option to move to a cloud-based platform in the future. The RFP formed the basis for what was to become a five-year, multi-million dollar contract and was framed by a fixed deadline to vacate the existing building.

KEY RESULTS

- + Transformed the IT infrastructure for Christchurch City Council's 2800 users without most of them being aware the transition had taken place
- + Managed the replacement of 250 servers in an aging data centre to an outsourced state-of-the-art virtual data centre environment – saving CCC an estimated \$3.5million per year
- + Negotiated the South Island's largest outsource IT infrastructure project and then delivered it within six months and on budget, despite manufacturing and freight delays
- + Successfully managed a multi-team approach with multiple stakeholders in each team and delivered the project without internal delays or any negative team dynamics
- + The data centre has since withstood significant earthquake events and ensured continuity of IT supply for the Council

“The process was extremely fast. From the time we kicked the project off to going live was less than six months”

THE SOLUTION

While Clarus managed the entire tender process, the final decision lay with CCC staff. It was successfully won by Christchurch-based Computer Concepts that had just started to build a new data centre in Christchurch with its sister company Snap.

It offered cutting-edge server technology, a more cost-efficient and environmentally friendly data storage service, plus state-of-the-art cooling systems that would roughly save \$500K in power consumption per year. The joint tender also proposed an outsourced virtualisation model, as opposed to the standard ‘lift and shift’ approach that both Clarus and Computer Concepts viewed as high risk due to the age and state of the current servers.

Clarus wrote the release and deployment plan for the Council to identify and mitigate any risk to the business and set the order in which the project would

be carried out. It also completed trials of the release and deployment, examining the development environment to ensure that the data would be migrated safely.

The project plan extended just six months from start to finish, with no extension possible. With such a tight timeframe, there was no room for error so planning and risk assessment was paramount.

Clarus recommended using four work streams: Human Resources, IT Service Management, Technical and Contract. The Council appointed project managers to each workstream who worked beside dedicated staff from Clarus and Computer Concepts to deliver the required outcomes against each stream. Clarus’ role was to keep the project on track; it required timely decisions from the Council business team to enable Computer Concepts to develop the infrastructure within the data centre to very tight deadlines.

THE RESULT

Project management required a cool head as it was not a project without its problems. At the time, enterprise grade hardware was manufactured to order, not stocked. Computer Concepts’ direct line to manufacturing plants in Mexico and Europe gave some surety of supply, but then flights were delayed due to volcanic ash over Europe and a fire in the delivery truck between Auckland and Christchurch drew on all the contingencies the project team had in place.

However, according to Helen Marginson, Senior Project Manager for the Council, no negative team

dynamics got in the way: “The urgency of the project was such that everyone was 100 percent focused on the end goal.”

Just short of deadline the project went live: “Some of our users stated that they didn’t know when the new system would go live, but then we suddenly noticed that everything seemed to be running a lot faster and we knew something had happened” says Gavin Till IM&CT Business Unit Manager, CCC.

Clarus was acquired by Assurity in December 2012.