Expert Retail IT, Without the Hassles

It is often said that the biggest test of a business is not building a successful model but continuing that success through changing economic times and rapidly altering customer demands. Nowhere is that challenge more evident than in the fashion retail industry, where tastes change as often as hemlines and consumers have a vast number of online and in-store purchasing opportunities.

THE CHALLENGE

As part of the process of separating from its parent company, a major New Zealand fashion retailer faced the task of creating an IT environment that would give it a competitive edge. This had to be done without distracting management from the challenge of growing the business in its own right. A further IT consideration was to in-source or outsource services since infrastructure staff remained with the parent company and recruiting sufficient staff to provide round-the-clock cover would not necessarily be that most financially viable option. The retailer issued a competitive requirements document and Lexel responded with a high-level proposal. As further business needs became apparent, Lexel's solutions specialists were able to adjust recommendations to create a made-to-measure solution.

Like most retailers today, the customer had a need to provide 24/7/365 service to customers and suppliers as well as the staff of its many bricks and mortar locations. This included everything from point of sale (POS) technology to corporate infrastructure.

THE SOLUTION

A detailed plan was made to migrate existing virtualised systems onto a new cloud infrastructure, with full project management to make sure that the transition of services went smoothly without impact to consumers. As a seven day a week retailer, very short outage windows had to be observed.

"We engaged with IBM for their architectural input and to ensure that the design we created was resilient enough to cope with the intense demands of our retail client. That extra attention in the planning stage built the foundation for a solution that would power our customer's technology services," said Glenn Lovegrove, GM Technical Services of Lexel.

A solution was created that included a new three stage recovery for backup process and replication to DR, as well as 24/7 support of a standardised IBM private cloud infrastructure. Thanks to Lexel's considerable IBM capabilities as well as proven cloud experience, it was possible to build an environment that has the flexibility to cope with the fast-changing demands of the fashion world, without missing a beat. The retailer's fully virtualised environment is located at a New Zealand-based top tier data centre, so all data remains under local jurisdiction. Data is also backed up off site to Lexel's separate backup data centre, with recovery tested regularly to ensure stringent service levels are adhered to.

The retail customer's solution was pre-staged, so that proof of concept and pilot scenarios could be tested and adjusted without impact to the business. Only when every aspect was absolutely ready was the customer's data migrated to the new system. Deployment was carefully managed so that there was a seamless transition to operational support.

To ensure access to round the clock expertise and avoid the distraction and costs involved with 24/7 support and infrastructure management, the retailer opted for the benefits of an OPEX based full outsource service from Lexel. This means that Lexel is contracted to manage and maintain infrastructure and provide support through their service desk to the retailer's headquarters and more than thirty stores.

THE OUTCOME

While the retailer always has access to information about their systems, Lexel takes full responsibility for every aspect of provisioning IT that supports and empowers the business. Thanks to decades of specialist retail IT experience, Lexel's team is well known for its industry know-how, and is equipped to make sure the customer gets the best from its technology investment.

Thanks to the virtualised environment Lexel has built using enterprise level IBM equipment, the retailer reaps the benefits of extreme reliability while achieving the economy of scale associated with cloud service models. This brings a remarkable level of flexibility, with the option to add new services in minutes, not days. Importantly, a fixed cost contract makes investment in IT utterly predictable, so the customer can budget effortlessly for technology investments.

"When making a major technology transition, it is vital to choose not only infrastructure that is easy to scale but also a solutions provider that can demonstrate the flexibility to deal with changing business needs," commented Glenn.

Thanks to a greater focus on the retailer than its parent company was previously able to offer, Lexel's managed service has brought the high availability that the business strives for, supporting a very high number of transactions without interruption. Staff and shoppers can continue their business, safe in the knowledge that the technology in place will make every purchasing experience a positive one.

ABOUT LEXEL

With more than twenty seven years of experience providing IT to many of New Zealand's best known retail, hospitality and business brands, Lexel is well known for strong expertise matched by exceptional service delivery. As an IBM preferred partner and with certification from most major vendors, Lexel is accomplished at working with the world's most trusted enterprise technology products.

Built on reliable, high performance IBM enterprise infrastructure, Lexel's cloud solutions provide access to superior IT capabilities while avoiding the distraction of complex management and unpredictable costs.

Lexel is a New Zealand owned provider of ICT services and solutions to business. We focus on maximising business performance by using industry leading expertise and solutions to streamline IT infrastructure. Twenty-two years in the IT business, Lexel is a known and trusted partner.

We specialise in providing solution consulting, infrastructure design, implementation, project management, outsourcing, support services and procurement. To allow us to deliver this wide range of services, Lexel Systems has partnered with the main technology providers in New Zealand and we have secured the highest level of certifications possible with each of these partners.

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