

Freeing IT Personnel from Systems Management

BMS relies on Cantono managed services to maintain and support its systems



“Now we don’t have to worry about systems support and management”

David Park, BMS Group

Business Challenge

Information technology systems provide critical business services in the fast-paced world of international insurance.

Without reliable, high-performance IT, business growth could not be sustained. But how did one global insurer cope with the dual demands of perfecting systems support and finding time and resource to develop competitive business applications?

Insurance is a highly competitive global marketplace, and BMS Group relies on effective, reliable systems to maintain an edge over its competitors. A period of rapid expansion had left the company's IT infrastructure significantly exposed to potential problems.

IT provides competitive edge

David Park, divisional director and group IT operations & resources manager, BMS, says: "Our core activity is high-quality insurance broking. But to provide the level of IT service this needs, it is essential that the Group has high-quality, modern, resilient systems."

Company growth exacerbates problem

Over the last few years, BMS Group has grown rapidly, and it became clear that a dynamic policy of constant growth was straining the group's IT infrastructure. The group's expanding global presence required massively increased system availability and support. The need for leading-edge IT systems also created the requirement for a large pool of skills that is difficult for any organisation to provide.

IT support overloaded

Park says: "Despite the quality of our in-house staff, we realised we were still suffering from a lack of knowledge and a lack of resources in trying to provide the level of service that we needed."

"We'd reached a position where our user base was suffering, because we were overburdened by the support role. We needed to be confident of IT support for the existing systems, so that the business could run smoothly."

New development suffering

BMS Group's emphasis on developing business-focused applications in-house was also suffering. Park explains: "IT managers had to be far too heavily involved in the detail of system support. We weren't able to concentrate on what we should have been doing: developing projects that would deliver business advantage for the group."

"Now, we don't have to worry about system support and management. Issues are dealt with in a timely and professional way, and we have the confidence to concentrate on business-related projects."

David Park, divisional director and group IT operations & resources manager, BMS





Solution

BMS Group initially investigated external server support from consultants and engineers, as well as extra storage space, but realised that this would not be enough. Park says: "We were initially looking at a storage solution, but once we started to think about strategic outsourcing, the advantages started to show themselves."

BMS Group consulted managed services provider Cantono, which recommended an outsourcing agreement.

BMS Group decided to work with Cantono because it provided managed services, outsourcing and a high level of Citrix expertise.

Servers, architectures and operating systems were upgraded and moved to Cantono's data centre, and storage and support issues were resolved with a leased storage area network and Cantono's customer support helpdesk.

Four of BMS Group's IT staff were transferred to Cantono. BMS Group continues to maintain an in-house software development capability.

Citrix enables easy and secure thin-client infrastructure access, without the need for complex desktop hardware, and was crucial to the smooth interfacing of such a large multinational. Park says: "Citrix is an area that has to be covered. Cantono is one of the few managed service providers in the country that can do that. We looked at other companies, but they either provided a partial solution, or were so large that we felt we wouldn't get the level of service we wanted."

IT Outsourced

BMS Group outsourced its entire IT infrastructure, while maintaining its core software development capability in-house. Implementation took around 18 months, from initiating the project, through proof of concept and relocating the helpdesk, to the main roll-out.

Development resource freed up

In response, the group upgraded and outsourced its IT infrastructure and management to managed services provider Cantono plc. As well as improving system uptime, the service has freed BMS Group's in-house IT staff from mundane support tasks, enabling them to focus on developing business-critical applications. Files are stored on the centralised secure server farm.

"We'll definitely continue working with Cantono. We've benefited from a huge level of expertise that we could never have drawn upon internally without bringing in third-party consultants."

David Park

New architecture implemented

Cantono architected the new environment using up-to-date cluster technology, and upgraded the company to new servers. The systems were upgraded from the Microsoft Windows NT operating system and Office 98 to Windows 2000 and Office XP, and moved to Cantono's data centre.

Storage space was leased at the data centre, and all operational support responsibility was transferred to Cantono's customer support helpdesk.

Products used

Citrix MetaFrame XP
HP DL range of Intel-based servers
Microsoft Windows 2000
Microsoft Windows XP

Benefits

- **Improved system uptime**

The primary benefit for the group has been stability. Park says: "Cantono provides performance statistics on a monthly basis, and the uptime is very, very good. Before, maintaining system uptime was very difficult. We were working full-time to keep our system up and running, so we didn't even have time to consider developing it."

Now, we don't have to worry about system support and management. Issues are dealt with in a timely and professional way, and we have the confidence to concentrate on business-related projects."

- **Constant support**

The breadth of Cantono's technical resource means that the right skills are available quickly to address any issues

- **Increased time for developing mission-critical applications**

BMS Group's IT department is now focused on working with users and brokers to develop mission-critical applications. Park says: "Outsourcing has freed our IT department to support and develop BMS Group's core business."

- **Future-proof**

Storage and other IT factors are no longer a problem. Additional storage space can be leased when necessary, enabling the group to archive documents in line with new regulations. The system has been designed to scale whenever required.

Park says: "We made sure we designed a system with built-in resilience that would allow for growth."

- **User-friendly implementation**

When user support was moved to Cantono's customer helpdesk, four of BMS Group's IT personnel moved as well, to ease the transfer

of expertise. "That could have been a major challenge," says Park.

"This type of personnel move is regulated by the transfer of undertaking for the protection of employees (TUPE), and could have been a tough time for everybody involved. But Cantono has experience of managing these transfers. Its HR people looked after the transfer very well, and it was done very professionally."

- **Little staff retraining needed**

A Cantono team was available for on-site, hands-on assistance. Park says: "It was really a massive undertaking – it's a huge system. There were enormous risks, but the roll-out went very smoothly."



About BMS

Headquartered in London, BMS Group is one of the top 10 reinsurance brokers worldwide. As market leaders in their chosen areas of specialisation, they transact over US\$1.4 billion of premiums annually, and provide advice, consultancy and risk transfer solutions to clients around the world.

Almost two thirds of t BMS' business is treaty and facultative reinsurance. The balance is largely specialist insurance in the harder-to-place commercial lines.

Summary

Both Cantono and BMS Group agree that the project has moved beyond service to become a valuable partnership. Cantono's consultants continue to work with the group to develop the infrastructure.

Regular service review meetings are held with senior infrastructure architects, who review

BMS Group's IT roadmap and implement new, upgraded capabilities where necessary.

"We'll definitely continue working with Cantono. We've benefited from a huge level of expertise that we could never have drawn upon internally without bringing in third-party consultants.



"We've managed to build a system that's covered all our requirements in a relatively short space of time, with minimal slippage. And it's left the group free to do what it does best."

David Park

This solution was delivered by CSF, which now forms part of Cantono.

020 7653 9000

www.cantono.com