

Software as a Service initiatives for UK Government Department of Work and Pensions

NTT Europe Online provides the right balance with SunGard Public Sector's software and expertise

SunGard Public Sector, based in London, is the UK's largest provider of business performance management software to local and central government. SunGard works with clients to develop and implement performance management frameworks that drive productivity, efficiency and effectiveness improvements at all organisational levels.

Software as a Service gives you greater financial control

From the outset in 2001, SunGard took a strategic decision to deliver its performance management software as a service, delivered to user desktops either securely over the internet or via closed wide area networks, in direct competition with the then standard perpetual licensing model.

To achieve this model SunGard began by hosting the solution themselves. Chris Knighton, CEO of SunGard, says: "The growth we were experiencing meant that our hosting operation, which was very clearly a secondary area of competence, was simply not scaling with demand. We wanted to focus on our core competence – delivering multi-million pound savings through performance management implementations – and entrust our hosting to a partner for whom it was absolutely core."

Financing this migration and ongoing operation was obviously important to SunGard. Furthermore, the pricing presented by NTT Europe Online for the solution needed to reflect the business model SunGard was presenting to the market.

"With such growth, we realised quickly that we needed to hand over the operation to experts and buy what we needed as a service rather than as occasional bursts of capital expenditure," explains Knighton. "NTT Europe Online provided the experience, the scalability and the pricing we needed. In short, the decision to work with NTT Europe Online took a load off of our shoulders."

The technical solution itself sits on a scalable platform built using Microsoft Windows Servers and IBM hardware with a Microsoft SQL database running in the background. SunGard's software sits on top of this scalable platform and NTT Europe Online's management services ensure that the platform remains available, reliable and secure.

Robert Steggles, European Marketing Director for NTT Europe Online, explains: "Software as a Service business, just like all other types of online business, are fundamentally concerned with generating revenue by providing useful tools and services online. It seems so obvious, but it is absolutely critical that businesses like this have a serious, stable and reliable hosting partner; without it their primary route to market, their primary fulfilment mechanism for the service and their primary marketing channel are all under threat."

As a result of this initiative, SunGard has seen strong take up of its solutions, achieving great success, and in 2006 boasts over 300 client organisation subscriptions, totalling thousands of users.

National Performance Management Framework

Delivering its software as a service was instrumental in SunGard securing contracts with the UK Government to provide a National Performance Management Framework (NPMF). The NPMF initiative is establishing an infrastructure for 408 UK local authorities to benchmark and improve

performance, share leading practice, deliver efficiency savings, improve service levels and report electronically to central government. Work to roll-out NPMF across the whole of the UK will have taken only 12 months from beginning to end.

Chris Knighton explains: "It would be inconceivable to achieve the schedules of a large scale project such as NPMF if one was employing traditional software licensing and hardware installation arrangements. It would simply take too long. Moreover, delivering the service through the browser has the added benefit that more people actually use the service because the interface is familiar to them. Having NTT Europe Online's infrastructure services in the background has given us peace of mind during this demanding project and helped us deploy a stream of other SaaS applications in record timescales."

An Innovative Software Solution

SunGard's innovative use of technology resulted in the prestigious Financial Times/CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) award for Innovative Software Solution of the Year in December 2005. The CIMA citation reads:

"The winner of this award is a flexible performance management tool which links to organisations' existing IT systems to automate data capture and allow performance information and trend analysis to be effectively presented using a range of sophisticated dashboards. It demonstrates the potential for driving significant enhancements in performance and the creation of a continuous improvement culture."

"Receiving an award like this is an external validation of all those decisions we have taken to get the company where it is, which is extremely gratifying," adds Knighton.

Robert Steggles agrees: "SunGard is a great example of a company that has adopted the Software as a Service model and is whole heartedly focussed on its core values to deliver an exceptional service to the end customer. NTT Europe Online is very happy to be part of such a success story."

Creating a Long Term Partnership

Asked to comment on the relationship SunGard enjoys with NTT Europe Online, Knighton says: "We've just signed up with NTT Europe Online for an extended contract to cope with more growth, which signals our satisfaction with its service and the success of our SaaS offering. Clearly, the decision to use NTT Europe Online has been an important one for SunGard to support the way we have chosen to operate our business. NTT Europe Online provides a reliable, secure and scalable solution, the finance maps to the business model we wish to provide and it understands the requirements and value of delivering a SaaS offering."