



Overview

Country: New Zealand

Industry: Electricity, Power and Gas

Customer Profile

Powerco is New Zealand's second largest electricity and gas distribution company, servicing approximately 410,000 consumers across the upper central and lower central North Island.

Business Situation

Powerco had previously maintained both Oracle and SQL Server platforms and sought to simplify its IT solution and reduce total cost of ownership by consolidating database management systems.

Solution

With the assistance of Microsoft Gold Partner, SQL Services Ltd, Powerco assessed its existing database management systems and identified SQL Server as a more cost-effective and manageable solution.

Benefits

- Reduces TCO by \$390,000 per annum
- Saves \$190,000 per annum in licensing costs
- Reduces support and management costs by \$200,000 per annum
- Cheaper and easier to support and maintain

Partner:

SQL Services Ltd



Power distributor switches server infrastructure and cut costs

“We’ve saved a significant amount of money, almost \$390,000 per annum, in migrating from Oracle to SQL Server. We’ve been able to save on rack space, reduce hardware, maintenance and licensing costs and have created numerous efficiencies through simplifying the server environment.”

Huw Griffiths, Infrastructure Manager, Powerco

Powerco is New Zealand's second largest electricity and gas distribution company, servicing approximately 410,000 consumers across the upper central and lower central North Island. Powerco had previously maintained both Oracle RAC and Microsoft® SQL Server® 2005 platforms, which meant the business incurred the expense of supporting, operating and maintaining two systems. Powerco sought to consolidate to a single server platform to help simplify its IT environment, and identified SQL Server as the most cost-effective and manageable solution. With the help of Microsoft Gold Partner, SQL Services Ltd, Powerco has commenced migration to SQL Server. The consolidation has enabled Powerco to eliminate significant costs, making it easier to manage and maintain systems in-house, without the need to invest in external consultants. The migration to SQL Server has helped Powerco to streamline its IT systems and cut total cost of ownership by \$390,000 a year.

“The Oracle platform was more expensive to license, maintain and support, particularly because of the specialised knowledge required, so it was clear that if possible, it would make sense and save money to migrate to SQL Server.”

Huw Griffiths, Infrastructure Manager, Powerco.

Situation

Powerco is New Zealand's second largest electricity and gas distribution company, with a network area spread across the upper central and lower central North Island. The company services approximately 410,000 consumers, representing 46 per cent of the gas connections and 16 per cent of the electricity connections in New Zealand.

Households, businesses and industries throughout the North Island depend on Powerco to deliver reliable electricity and gas services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A robust and secure data management system is essential to Powerco's business to ensure systems run smoothly and customers receive continuity of service.

Powerco was using both Oracle RAC and Microsoft® SQL Server® 2005 to support applications running on either one platform or the other. This meant the business faced the expense of licensing, maintaining and supporting two systems, as well as the added complexity of working across two different platforms. It also required staff, or contractors with the technical knowledge, to administer both Oracle and SQL Server systems.

With Powerco's Oracle platform approaching the end of its warranty cycle, and a major upgrade of the financial system scheduled, it made sense for the company to reassess its server solution and decide whether it should replace existing hardware or

consolidate to a single server platform.

Powerco recognised that consolidating database platforms would simplify its IT environment and significantly reduce the total cost of ownership of the database management system.

“The case for consolidation was simple – why maintain two systems if you don't need to?” says Huw Griffiths, Infrastructure Manager, Powerco.

“When we first set up Oracle we configured Oracle RAC to support active/active clusters, high availability and automatic failover. However, Microsoft SQL Server has many of the same features and we can get the same redundancy from SQL Server as we can from Oracle.

“The Oracle platform was more expensive to license, maintain and support, particularly because of the specialised knowledge it required. It was clear that migrating to SQL Server would save money,” says Griffiths.

Solution

Powerco undertook an internal review of the existing solution and assessed the pros and cons of Oracle versus SQL Server. This analysis pointed towards some significant advantages in choosing SQL Server over Oracle. These included reduced licensing and maintenance costs, ease of management and fewer requirements for a specialised skill

set to manage and service the system. The feasibility of migrating to SQL Server was then assessed through consultation with vendors, who confirmed that most of Powerco's applications could be supported on SQL Server, with the remaining end of life applications being replaced with SQL Server compatible ones.

Having assessed the situation internally, Powerco sought the assistance of SQL Services Ltd, a Microsoft Gold Partner database management consultancy, to assess, plan, design and build the SQL Server 2005 environment. As SQL Services Ltd specialises in proactive database monitoring, management and support for both Oracle and SQL Server platforms, the company had the expertise to ensure the migration to SQL Server would run smoothly

SQL Services Senior Technical Consultant Kevin Nicholas performed a site review of the existing solution and developed five different scenarios for the server configuration with an analysis of the technical pros and cons of each.

SQL Services also worked on developing, testing and staging environments for SQL Server, to ensure that Powerco had a large and robust database environment to test and stage applications before putting them into production. This allowed Powerco to manage and maintain the server platform in-house.

"The ability to manage the database management systems internally was important to Powerco, as it allowed the business to retain more knowledge in-house and reduce reliance on external consultants," says Peter Cary, Business Development Manager, SQL Services Ltd.

Powerco decided to migrate to SQL Server as part of the upgrade process for applications over a one-year timeline. Although a project requiring continuous system availability delayed the migration of Powerco's GIS systems, full system migration is on target for completion in October 2009.

Benefits

Even before full consolidation has been completed, Powerco has realised significant benefits from the migration from Oracle to SQL Server, and when the GIS system is migrated further performance gains are expected. The business now has a more streamlined and efficient system with improved integration and security and reduced TCO.

"We've saved a significant amount of money, almost \$390,000 a year, in migrating from Oracle to SQL Server. We've been able to save on rack space, reduce hardware, maintenance and licensing costs and have created numerous efficiencies through simplifying the server environment," says Griffiths.

A simplified and more efficient system

The migration to SQL Server has simplified many aspects of Powerco's IT environment, creating numerous efficiencies.

One example of a major system improvement is the Customer Works Management System (CWMS) for gas that was implemented mid-May. This was the first new system to be implemented in the updated SQL Server environment. The system integrates internal and external stakeholders into a single online workflow, and manages the activities associated with new gas connections.

By standardising activities, the CWMS helped eliminate non-value adding work steps, and significantly reduced the opportunity cost of error and re-work. Compared to the legacy framework, the CWMS manages three times the number of work steps and integrates twice as many user groups. As a result, Gas team is more effectively able to manage new connection volumes, which are currently running at 200 per cent compared to the same time last year.

Enhanced integration and security

Through migrating to a single server platform, Powerco has achieved a more integrated and streamlined system.

"Getting information from one database to another is greatly simplified without the need for Oracle translations. We are now

moving towards a much more integrated infrastructure overall. Three years ago, our systems were more disjointed and separate. We now have the single server platform and Microsoft® BizTalk® Server orchestrations take data between the GIS and the JDE Databases. This allows people to use existing data rather than creating new Access Databases to get the information they need," says Griffiths.

Improved manageability, greater control

Powerco's database consolidation has eliminated the need for two Oracle database administrators, which enabled Powerco to reorganise its IT department and re-assign these administrators to other areas. In the longer term, eliminating the need for specialist Oracle RAC technical expertise will make it easier for Powerco to resource its IT requirements in-house.

"SQL Server is based on Windows so we can hire staff with more generalist skills to manage the environment. We no longer need to hire technical contractors or consultants with specialist skills based on HPUX," says Griffiths.

Powerco's IS staff have found maintaining SQL Server databases easier than working in Oracle RAC. "Things like taking snapshots of the database, exporting into another databases, and database refreshes seemed difficult in Oracle, but are almost as easy as cutting and pasting in SQL Server," says Griffiths.

For More Information

For more information about SQL Server visit: www.microsoft.com/sql

Reduced operational and hardware costs

Database consolidation has also enabled Powerco to eliminate many costs. There's no longer the need to maintain hardware for the Oracle environment, such as UNIX servers or HP-UX boxes and the business has benefited from reduced licensing costs and rack space.

"SQL Services identified areas of server sprawl in their assessment of our systems. We had a number of SQL Servers, which have been consolidated down to two, reducing our licensing, management, operational and back-up costs," says Griffiths.

With a more streamlined, integrated and efficient server platform in place, Powerco is now looking to extend the benefits of the migration to Microsoft® 2008. The business is already running Windows SQL Server® 2005 by upgrading to Microsoft® SQL Server® Server® 2008 and SQL Server 2008 in a test environment and will soon be able to utilise the integrated Business Intelligence features of SQL Server 2008, such as user-friendly analytics,

reporting, planning and budgeting tools as standard and integrates with Microsoft® Office tools.

Software & Services

- Microsoft® SQL Server® 2005
- Microsoft® SQL Server® 2008
- Windows Server® 2003
- Windows Server® 2008
- Microsoft® BizTalk® Server 2006
- Microsoft® Office 2003