LSH AUTO CRUISES INTO THE 'FAST LANE' WITH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

HYBRID CLOUD TRANSITION FUELS AGILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION PUSH

LSH AUTO

CUSTOMER PROFILE
A global premium automotive retailing group with 11 Australian outlets and 520 local employees.

CHALLENGES
A recent rapid expansion required all dealerships to move to one IT network quickly, without business interruption. There was also a need to bolster security and improve scalability.

SOLUTION
• Significant upgrade to HPE Aruba network infrastructure, endpoint devices, as well as the procurement, configuration and installation of HPE on-premise server infrastructure.
• Hefty data transfer & implementing workload management migration across to new, fit-for-purpose hybrid IT environment
• Endpoint security protection (Sophos) and highly redundant cloud-based firewalls (CheckPoint)—all part of a multi-layered security approach.

BENEFITS
• Enhanced customer experience
• Multi-layered security
• More productive workforce
• Increased staff morale
• Removed IT complexities
• Enabled innovation
• Removed vulnerabilities
• Enabled scalability
• From reactive to proactive

LSH Auto Australia has accelerated digital transformation into the 'fast lane' following a secure and successful hybrid cloud migration that sees the automotive powerhouse driving agility, flexibility and business innovation across its entire dealer network and ramping up security.

"With a team of 520 employees nationally, LSH Auto runs a lean operation with a high reliance and requirement for IT to drive digital transformation and innovation," according to Alex Wong, LSH Auto Australia's Head of IT.

As part of the migration, LSH Auto underwent a massive infrastructure and endpoint upgrade, and made a significant transfer of data and workload management onto a new hybrid IT environment. It all runs via a mix of on-premise, colocation datacentre and private cloud, underpinned by HPE server and storage infrastructure.

On the security front, the company adopted a private cloud infrastructure to securely migrate its data, and also created a new active directory and email platforms (on-premise email protection was previously on-board).

In fact, the security moves couldn't come quick enough. With security traditionally controlled through Germany, and no data sovereignty framework or adherence to local compliance legislation, there was a pressing need to bolster the security agenda at the Australian arm of operations.

Certainly, big things are at play for the South Melbourne-based company, which is a premium automotive retailing group and the leading dealer of Daimler, AG and Mercedes Benz, with 11 outlets in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

The company's global business footprint covers over 240 outlets in more than 110 cities across seven markets: Mainland China, Taiwan Region, South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom, Cambodia, and Australia.

DELIVERING ONE
IT NETWORK

Wong said the Australian outfit experienced rapid expansion following the successful acquisition of Daimler AG and Mercedes Benz dealerships across Australia.

"With this rapid expansion came the requirement to bring all dealerships onto the one IT network quickly and without business interruption," Wong said, explaining every risk had to be considered and mitigated well ahead of time to ensure business continuity during the transition.

Wong said the goal was to enable the in-house IT team to focus on business solution delivery, and be less concerned with IT infrastructure maintenance and the routine burden of IT operations.

Certainly, with speed a factor, and business continuity a major challenge, the dealer cranked up its efforts to find a trusted partner.

Enter Somerville, an end-to-end IT partner with a 40-year history, who put the pedal to the medal to deliver a comprehensive, yet timely cloud transition plan for LSH Auto after reviewing the company's existing setup, and advising on the changes required.

"For me, Somerville is one of those companies that are big enough to deliver – and small enough to care," Wong said. "Somerville is the right fit for our own business. They are their own ISP, they have tech talent and purchasing power, and LHS is not like a drop in the ocean for them."

With time a critical factor, the Somerville team got to work and developed a transition plan and a 'fit-for-purpose' solution that would address LSH Auto's immediate business continuity needs, while also creating a bridge for future digital transformation.

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TRANSITION PLAN 'FULL SPEED AHEAD'

So, what were the next steps? For starters, each site required a significant upgrade to HPE Aruba network infrastructure, endpoint devices, as well as the procurement, configuration and installation of HPE on-premise server infrastructure.

And the clock was ticking. In fact, the Somerville team had a 24-48 hour period over a weekend to complete this component of the project, ensuring minimal disruption to the business during their regular trading hours, and that all systems were back up and running for the start of the work week.

Certainly, the project team operated at full speed - working on the necessary upgrades, performing a hefty data transfer, and implementing the workload management migration across to the new hybrid IT environment.

And with security now a major focal point, endpoint security protection, along with highly redundant cloud-based firewalls are now operational – all part of a multi-layered security approach.

"We have continued to bolster and improve their security over time to ensure a multi-layered security approach," according to Somerville Chief Information and Security Officer (CISO), Kevin Koelmeyer..

"Due to the unique auto dealer regulations and reporting requirements for different states, we had to customise each CRM implementation for each location," Koelmeyer explained.

"But Somerville got down to business and worked collaboratively with each site (and the required software vendor) to ensure a smooth transition took place."

Meanwhile, connectivity and uptime guarantees (as part of the agreed SLA) also had to be navigated. In that vein, each location was transitioned onto new Internet links and switching infrastructure from HPE Aruba, which allowed for redundancy.

PASSION FOR CX IGNITES
ACROSS NETWORK

Additionally, newly installed Wi-Fi infrastructure had to ensure every device was connected from day one. Where possible, legacy hardware was integrated into the transition to maximise resources and extend the useful life of existing IT investments.

But the story didn't end there - the auto dealership also wanted to reinvent the customer experience (CX) for buying vehicles and to delight customers in the process.

In fact, as part of the transition process, LSH Auto was on a mission to integrate new technologies across the company in a bid to deliver enhanced CX. Part of the goal was to eliminate unnecessary complexity and reduce avoidable roadblocks for the in-house IT team - resulting in an invigorated focus on CX.

"Our people are more interested in delivering a superior customer experience. We wanted to move from a reactive IT environment to a proactive environment – without having to worry about the basics," Wong said.

Simply by removing the burden of patching applications onto the legacy system (an expensive and time-consuming exercise), the IT team can now focus on fostering digital transformation and drive innovation across the organisation.

"They now experience greater IT agility to deliver innovative new services and digital transformation that enhances their customer experience," Wong said.

RIDING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

Certainly, LSH Auto's IT transition journey was no solo ride - instead it was a collaborative effort and solid partnership right from the beginning.

"Working with Somerville is a shared experience and they're invested in our success – they function as an extension of our team," Wong said. "The technology environment they've created for us has also led to a more productive workforce and increased staff morale."

Now, with one foot on the digital transformation accelerator, the company can drive strategic moves and innovation right across the business minus the distractions and complexities of IT management, or the constant threat of security gaps or vulnerabilities.

"What used to keep me up at night are cybersecurity threats and making sure systems are not compromised," Wong said, revealing he now rests easy thanks to the ongoing relationship with Somerville as adviser and partner.

"Having things work is the foundation of my role and the value-add Somerville provides is that they are able to help us with our strategic goals and enhance our business," Wong said, adding Somerville are also performing all IT infrastructure setup and services for a new vision of the business, LSH Property.

"You can't match the skills of a dedicated solutions provider, so choosing a provider like Somerville gives you access to the best of the best."

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