IBM

ScottishPower generates customer service excellence with IBM

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

Support core billing systems and customer information databases; maintain high availability for applications used by call-centre staff; enable up to 90,000 customer energy bills to be processed nightly

■ **The Solution**

ScottishPower runs its core Multi Service Platform application on an IBM System z mainframe (model z990) with four processing engines, hosted by IBM; a System z server in a second IBM data centre acts as a cold stand-by for disaster recovery purposes

■ **The Benefit**

The IBM mainframe delivers the necessary reliability and robustness to act as the nerve-centre of all ScottishPower's Energy Retail operations, supporting core billing and call-centre systems, and interfacing with almost fifty other systems; the mainframe provides a resilient, scalable and security-rich platform, helping ScottishPower to reduce operating costs

ScottishPower (www.scottishpower.com) is an international energy company, made up of four businesses: Energy Retail, Energy Wholesale and Energy Networks in the UK, and PPM Energy in the US. ScottishPower provides electricity, transmission and distribution services throughout the UK, supplying electricity and gas services to more than 5.2 million customers.

Large utilities companies face the significant challenge of managing millions of customer accounts, including metering, billing, inbound enquiries and problem resolution. To provide excellent service to its enormous customer base, ScottishPower relies on the power and capacity of an IBM System z mainframe, which runs its Multi Service Platform (MSP) core business application. The hosting and maintenance of the mainframe environment is outsourced to IBM Global Services, enabling ScottishPower to focus on its core business while IBM ensures high availability for its systems.

Andrew Macdonald, MSP Development Manager for the Energy Retail business of ScottishPower, comments: "We process up to 90,000 customer bills each night on the System z, and it also handles all meter readings, payments and call-centre activity, representing millions of daily batched transactions. With IBM running the mainframe, we benefit from a large pool of specialist skills and very high levels of service."

System z at the heart of the business

The mainframe environment for ScottishPower Energy Retail has two broad functions: the overnight batch processing of all daily customer account transactions, and supporting the online activity in the company's large call-centres. More than 1,000 call-centre operatives connect to the MSP on the System z mainframe either directly through a green-screen interface, or through a graphical interface running on another server.

The 60,000 customer calls made to ScottishPower every week are handled on the mainframe, which is used to log and track all enquiries through to resolution. Data from the core customer databases on the System z feeds into the majority of applications used throughout the Energy Retail organisation.

"The System z server sits at the centre of everything that we do," comments Macdonald. "Not only does it run our most visible systems – billing and call-centre applications – but also it connects to nearly fifty systems running on other platforms, including financials, reporting, marketing and business planning. This makes it a truly business-critical platform for ScottishPower. In our opinion, there is no other platform that we could trust to offer the same levels of availability and reliability as System z."

Mainframe computing as a service

By outsourcing the management and servicing of its mainframe environment to IBM, ScottishPower has reduced its need to maintain specialized skills in-house. IBM hosts a number of big mainframe environments on behalf of customers, and maintains a large team of specialists. The cost of employing these specialists is effectively spread out over the entire customer base, so the cost per customer is lower than

if each customer were employing its own dedicated staff.

Moreover, at times of peak demand – for instance, during a system migration or upgrade – IBM can provide many more technicians than it would be practical for an individual customer to employ on a permanent basis.

"The outsourcing contract with IBM means that we effectively purchase the mainframe as a service," says Macdonald. "For a known cost, IBM delivers to agreed service levels, with round-the-clock support. We also benefit from a second IBM site for disaster recovery purposes, which helps to protect our core business systems."

IBM maintains spare mainframe capacity in a second data centre for ScottishPower's use, and tests disaster recovery processes on an annual basis.

Ready for growth

As ScottishPower continues to grow, the ability of the System z platform to handle enormous processing loads will ensure that it can continue to support the organisation. The current System z configuration can be non-disruptively scaled to meet any scheduled or unforeseen business requirement that ScottishPower may face.

Macdonald concludes, "In our opinion, the mainframe is the only platform capable of offering the performance and reliability that we need. The outsourcing arrangement with IBM provides further reassurance that our core business systems will always be more readily available when we need them."

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> *MSP Development Manager*
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