



Matrix Benefits from Future-Proof and Resilient IT Systems

oncore IT Provides Financial Services Business with Cost-Effective Disaster Recovery and Corporate-Level IT and Communications Infrastructure

About Matrix Group

Matrix Group is a financial services business founded twenty-one years ago in 1987, consisting of Investment Management (such as commercial property, hedge funds and private equity), Investment Banking (such as corporate finance) and Investment Services (such as project finance and alternative energies). The Group is currently in a growth period, now with 140 members of staff having doubled in employee numbers since 2004. It is therefore essential for the IT systems to be resilient and predictable and that they are configured to be scalable to handle any growth the company experiences in the future, saving on costs in the long term.

The Challenge: Ensuring Business Continuity

Matrix has been using the IT support and solutions services of oncore IT since 2001, during which time oncore IT has helped the company to re-locate and implemented numerous solutions, all aimed at increasing the efficiency and reliability of the IT systems. oncore IT also provides Matrix with ongoing IT support services, with an oncore IT engineer permanently onsite at Matrix.

Three of the most important and business-advancing implementations oncore IT has carried out for Matrix have been the server clustering and failover system, the Managed Desktop solution and the data backup and recovery (OLB) service. All three services have improved employee productivity and significantly improved the resilience of critical systems, so that in the event of a system breakdown or office disaster, there are solutions in place to ensure that business will continue as usual.

Laurence Duff, IT Manager of Matrix, commented:

“With the failover system and disaster recovery service in place, we now have a highly resilient, reliable and predictable IT system...I can now assure the board that our business will still be able to function even if our IT systems fail.”

Patric Kinstrey, Director of oncore IT, stated: “We invest heavily into corporate-style IT systems so that clients like Matrix, which have a smaller employee base but have diversified and demanding business requirements, can benefit from an IT service that traditionally only a large global enterprise could expect from their in-house support function.”

The Solution: Greater Resiliency, Predictability and Productivity

With an ever increasing flow of financial assets being dealt on a daily basis, it is essential for Matrix that its IT systems are continually functioning. oncore IT not only provides Matrix with its 24/7 support service - which aims to fix most faults before customers even know they have occurred – the team has also worked with their IT Manager to implement a number of additional hardware and software solutions to ensure business continuity and uptime for Matrix.

24/7 Support, Monitoring & Fixing

At the heart of oncore IT's solutions for Matrix is its total outsourced IT support service, PReSS (Proactive Remote Engineering Support Service) IT network management system, which provides continuous and proactive system monitoring, fault identification, alerting and resolution services 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. PReSS incorporates a full call logging and

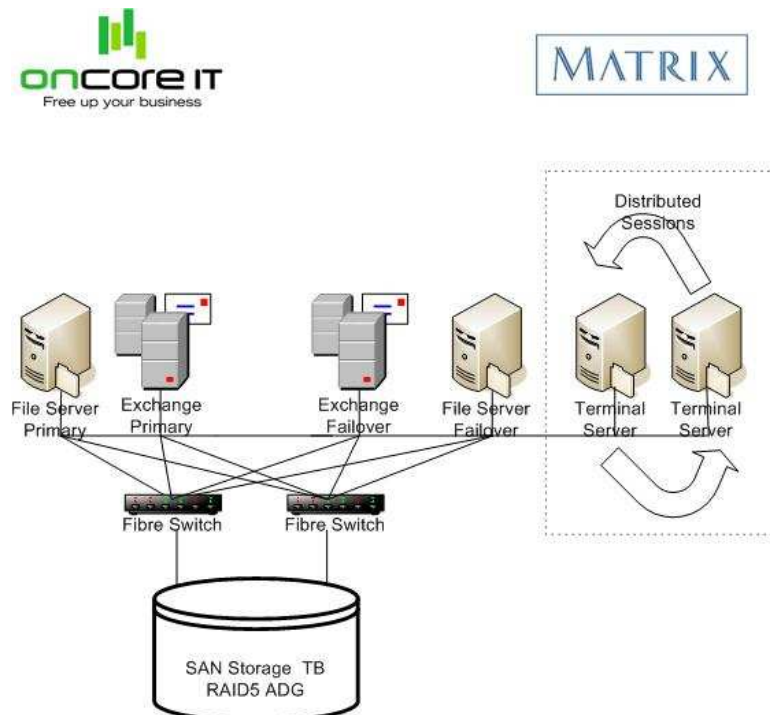
escalation process that ensures any IT problem detected is immediately logged and then constantly tracked through the system until it has been resolved by the Network Operations Centre (NOC) team in accordance with the Service Level Agreement (SLA) Matrix has chosen. The system has been designed to be completely transparent in that it will allow full access by nominated staff at Matrix to view all support activity undertaken by oncore IT. This feature further ensures that oncore IT is indeed meeting its service levels.

However, oncore IT provides Matrix with much more than just IT support. It also provides state of the art data backup and security solutions and two firewalls, as well as always looking for innovative ways to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of its IT systems.

Failover servers

Creating a clustered server solution was essential for greater resiliency of the hardware. It involved creating a SAN failover system that would engage a redundant but always-on set of passive servers should the File & Print or Microsoft Exchange servers ever fail. All of the live data is stored locally on the SAN, so that should one system fail, the redundant system that is also connected to the SAN will automatically take over. oncore IT also created a failover Terminal Server for Matrix. Diagram 1 below illustrates how the clustering solution works.

Diagram 1



Secure Remote Access

With an increasing number of remote workers in the business and the need for them to be able to securely access the company data without threat of intrusion, oncore IT has created a thin client platform. The solution involved Matrix moving from Citrix to Microsoft Terminal Server 2003. Remote workers now connect to the Matrix NLB (Network Load Balancing) Cluster Terminal Server via the WAN and work from home or from a laptop as if they were in the office. The dual load balanced Terminal Server provides improved performance and scalability. Matrix users are now able to securely access the system from any location via a Secure Socket Layer Virtual Private Network (SSL VPN), further secured with two factor authentication to prevent unauthorised users from accessing the system.

This facility allows for a more flexible working structure and also provides an additional way to access company files and emails in the event of an office disaster or a transport issue that prevents access to the office.

Managed Desktop

Due to the organic growth of Matrix, most PCs in the office had been set up differently, with no common configuration policies, no central management and few rules to prevent users from downloading certain software that could slow down or corrupt the PC. This meant that unnecessary support time was being used to trouble-shoot problems on the machines and IT had to work out how each machine was configured before even starting to fix a problem. According to Gartner Group, approximately 80% of unplanned downtime is caused by people and process issues, while the remainder is caused by technology failures and disasters.

oncore IT therefore worked with Matrix to design and install its Managed Desktop solution, which involved the reconfiguring and lockdown of all Matrix desktop PCs to have uniform company policy settings and applications according to industry best practice. This reduced the time to set up each machine from an average of 4 hours to 25 minutes, reduced the number of applications on the workstations from 407 to 53 and provided Matrix with a clear knowledge of the software licensing status, important for both business requirements and cost-saving reasons.

Furthermore, having knowledge of the underlying configuration of each PC allowed oncore IT to more quickly identify faults and also limited the likelihood of misuse and unauthorised access. In the now less likely event that a PC fault will occur, oncore IT can very quickly reset the PC to the agreed policies and recover the data from data centre, turning a fault resolution timeframe from hours into minutes and significantly impacting on individual productivity levels.

Laurence Duff, IT Manager of Matrix, commented on the Managed Desktop service: *"The Managed Desktop service from oncore IT has significantly improved our uptime because we now have a lot fewer problems occurring on our PCs and any that do occur are fixed in minutes rather than hours. Individual productivity has definitely increased as a result of the implementation."*

Online Backup and Recovery, OLB

One of the most critical managed services oncore IT provides Matrix with is the online data backup service (OLB), which is based on Asigra's award-winning data protection software technology. As the service is online and fully encrypted from the moment it leaves the Matrix network, it is much easier, quicker and safer to store and, if ever required, restore. oncore IT employs a fully resilient data back-up vault so that should the data be lost from the local servers at Matrix, oncore IT can immediately deploy a full data restoration from its own data centre to the Matrix servers.

Matrix recognises that ensuring data protection involves being able to restore data from the backups; it is not enough just to carry out a daily backup without testing the backup is working. oncore IT therefore carries out an annual data restore test for Matrix, the more recent one being in February 2007. In partnership with a DR office provider, Matrix moved ten key people from its office to temporary offices and oncore IT provided the temporary servers. oncore IT downloaded the latest Matrix backed up data to its redundant servers in its data centre and immediately shipped the servers to the temporary office.

Concluding comments

David Ebsworth, Head of Technology at oncore IT, said: *"Because of the projects that we have implemented, Matrix now has a more pragmatic and corporate style IT system. End to end their systems are now controlled and known. From locked down desktops with applications that are deployed by Microsoft Active Directory, to the clustered and resilient server infrastructure, to the security of the data backup being encrypted and stored off site in both London and Paris, Matrix has an IT system that is proven to deliver true tangible benefits to allow their business to continue to grow."*

Laurence Duff concludes: *"With the failover system and disaster recovery service in place, we now have a highly resilient, reliable and predictable IT system. We know that should our IT systems fail, we have a spare set of servers ready to kick into action and should the spare set of servers also fail, such as from a blackout or office disaster, oncore IT has all of our data saved, ready to be restored to whichever temporary office we are allocated. I can now assure the board that our business will still be able to function even if our IT systems fail."*

About oncore IT

oncore IT provides a 24/7, 365 days a year managed IT service for small and medium sized businesses, incorporating both hardware and software for a complete outsourced IT solution. oncore IT partners with best of breed vendors to provide an IT management service that only a large corporate would normally have access to. Services include: remote IS management; provision of all hardware equipment and software licenses; disaster recovery; remote (offsite and online) backup and recovery; desktop management and assistance; equipment hosting and replacement; monitoring and alerting; network access services; bandwidth management; firewall provisioning; and email filtering. For more information, please visit the company's website at www.oncoreIT.com or call 08450 541122.