



Oncore IT provides financial services group, Matrix, with cost-effective, resilient IT infrastructure and disaster recovery solution

Project introduction

Matrix is a privately owned financial services group in the UK with around 250 staff. To support the business today and provide future flexibility, it required IT systems to be resilient, easy to manage, cost effective and scalable to support future business growth.

Matrix has been an Oncore IT customer since 2001 during which time a variety of important and business advancing implementations have been carried out to enhance IT efficiency and reliability.

Oncore IT has deployed a server clustering and failover system, managed desktop solution and online data back up and recovery service. All three have improved employee productivity and significantly improved the performance of critical systems, such that in the event of a system breakdown or disaster, solutions are in place to ensure business continuity.

Oncore IT also provides ongoing IT support services, with a systems engineer permanently onsite at Matrix's offices.

David Ebsworth, Oncore IT's chief technology officer said, "We invest heavily in enterprise-class IT systems so that clients like Matrix, which have a smaller employee base but demanding business requirements, can benefit from an IT service that traditionally only large global enterprises could expect from their in-house support function."

A range of Oncore IT managed services provided

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 support service - which fixes most faults before customers even know they have occurred – the team also worked with the in-house IT manager to implement a number of additional hardware and software solutions to ensure business continuity and uptime for Matrix.

At the heart of Oncore IT's outsourced managed services is PReSS, a remote network monitoring solution which provides continuous and proactive system monitoring, fault identification, alerting and resolution 24/7/365.

PReSS incorporates a full call logging and escalation process which ensures IT problems detected are immediately logged and then constantly tracked through the system until they have been resolved by the network operations centre team in accordance with the service level agreement Matrix has chosen. The system has been designed to be completely transparent and allows full access to nominated Matrix staff so they can view all support activity undertaken by Oncore IT.

However, Oncore IT delivers Matrix much more than just IT support. It also provides state of the art data back up and security solutions, as well as always looking for innovative ways to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of Matrix's IT systems.

Server failover and SSL VPN remote access

Creating a clustered server solution was essential for greater resiliency of the hardware. Oncore IT created a SAN failover system which will engage a redundant but always-on set of passive servers should the file & print or Microsoft Exchange servers fail.

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 also installed 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 a WAN and can work remotely just as if they were in the office. Matrix users are now able to securely access the system via a SSL VPN, further secured with two-factor authentication to prevent unauthorised users from accessing the system.

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

Rationalising Matrix's PC environment

Due to Matrix's organic growth, most PCs in the office had been set up differently, with no common configuration policies, central management and few rules to prevent users from downloading software which could slow down or corrupt PCs.

This meant that unnecessary support time was being used to trouble-shoot problems on machines and IT staff had to work out how each machine was configured before even starting to fix problems. Oncore IT therefore worked with Matrix to design and install its managed desktop solution, which involved reconfiguring and locking down all desktop PCs to meet a uniform company policy on settings and applications, according to industry best practice.

This has 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 has allowed Oncore IT to identify faults more quickly and limit the likelihood of misuse and unauthorised access. In addition, in the unlikely event a fault does occur, Oncore IT can now quickly reset a PC to the agreed policies and recover the data from its data centre.

Laurence Duff, Matrix's IT manager, says, "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, those that do occur, are fixed in minutes rather than hours. Individual productivity has definitely increased as a result of the implementation."

Fully tested online data back up provides cost effective disaster recovery

One of the most critical managed services provided by Oncore IT is an online data back up service (OLB), based on Asigra's award-winning data protection software technology. As the service is online and data 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.

Matrix recognises that it is not enough just to carry out daily back ups without testing the solution actually works in practice. Oncore IT therefore carries out an annual data restore test for Matrix.

Tangible results

Ebsworth said: "Because of the projects that we have implemented, Matrix now has a more manageable and corporate style IT system. End-to-end its systems are controlled. From locked down desktops to clustered and resilient server infrastructure, along with data back up being encrypted and stored off site in both London and Amsterdam, Matrix has an IT system that is proven to deliver true operational benefits."

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, 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 go down."

- ENDS -

About Matrix Group

Matrix Group is a privately owned financial services business in the UK with around £4.25 billion of assets under management and 250 professionals employed across three divisions: asset management, investment banking and property. Since being founded in 1987, Matrix has raised more than £20 billion of assets for investments across these business areas. For further information, visit www.matrixgroup.co.uk

About Oncore IT

Oncore IT is a cloud Managed Service Provider with vast experience delivering and managing critical IT infrastructure for clients operating from state-of-the art tier 4 datacentres in the UK and Europe. One of only 10 tier 1 bandwidth providers in the world, clients get unparalleled connectivity, super fast system performance, unmatched reliability and total security.

Oncore IT offer a variety of hosting, co-location and cloud-based managed services all guaranteed by class-leading service level agreements and solutions looked after by professional, dedicated account managers and technical experts.

Oncore IT excels in designing, implementing, and managing scalable, high performance, low latency infrastructure so its works faultlessly, fully supporting line of business applications no matter what size of company or industry.

PCs, servers, firewalls, security, Internet connectivity, remote access, online data back up, anti spam, virus protection, email and office applications, along with business continuity, remote monitoring and 24/7/365 technical support – that's what we mean by infrastructure.

Oncore IT makes infrastructure work because that's what makes businesses work. That's why year after year, 95% of customers renew their contracts with us.

For more information, please visit the web at www.Oncore.IT.com or call 08450 541122.