

Clear thinking about your **IT** support

Case Study: Altro – world leaders in high performance flooring and walling

A firm base for growth

An interview with Altro Floors, Head of IT, Andrew Houston,

Altro Floors – part of the international Altro Group plc – is a world leader in specialist flooring and walling surfaces. Its range of high performance surfaces are designed to meet critical safety and hygiene standards across a wide variety of applications, such as the food & drink industry and the education sector.

Until recently, the core of the company's IT infrastructure was a bespoke, 15-year old system that ran sales, financials and warehousing solutions. There was little integration, however, between key business functions.

“The old system was unique, it met our needs in the past and could continue to keep us where we were. But, we knew it would not meet our needs in the future.”



Replacing a unique, bespoke system

After 2 years of researching and assessing all the available options, the company made a strategic decision to move to a new J.D. Edwards OneWorld solution in early 2001. “There must have been 30 or more options considered,” says Andrew. “Ultimately, however, the J.D. Edwards solution provided what we needed: a configurable piece of well-supported software, with its own toolset, that was also geographically mobile and suited to both the size and complexity of our business. The aim was to deliver a 21st century solution that could move the business forward.”



Running J.D. Edwards on an HP UNIX cluster



Versatility brings success

J.D. Edwards introduced Altro to Prestige as a preferred partner in the delicate process of migrating a major enterprise to a new IT infrastructure.

“We considered a number of platforms for our new solution and asked Prestige to advise on a variety of different options,” says Andrew. “They did a good job on considering the alternatives.”

Altro decided on an HP UNIX/Oracle platform, for which Prestige produced a number of fully detailed documents that defined the whole solution – J.D. Edwards/HP UNIX/Oracle – in detail.

“As part of the process we set key objectives for the system that Prestige would be delivering. It had to be resilient, support our needs, reduce our running costs and where possible provide a platform that would be upgradeable.”

A lot of work was done over a 4-month period, Andrew recalls. Prestige provided vital input on all key issues, including sizing the system.

“Prestige did a very good deal, too,” says Andrew. “It was a fixed-price solution to deliver the J.D. Edwards software environment onto an HP UNIX platform.”

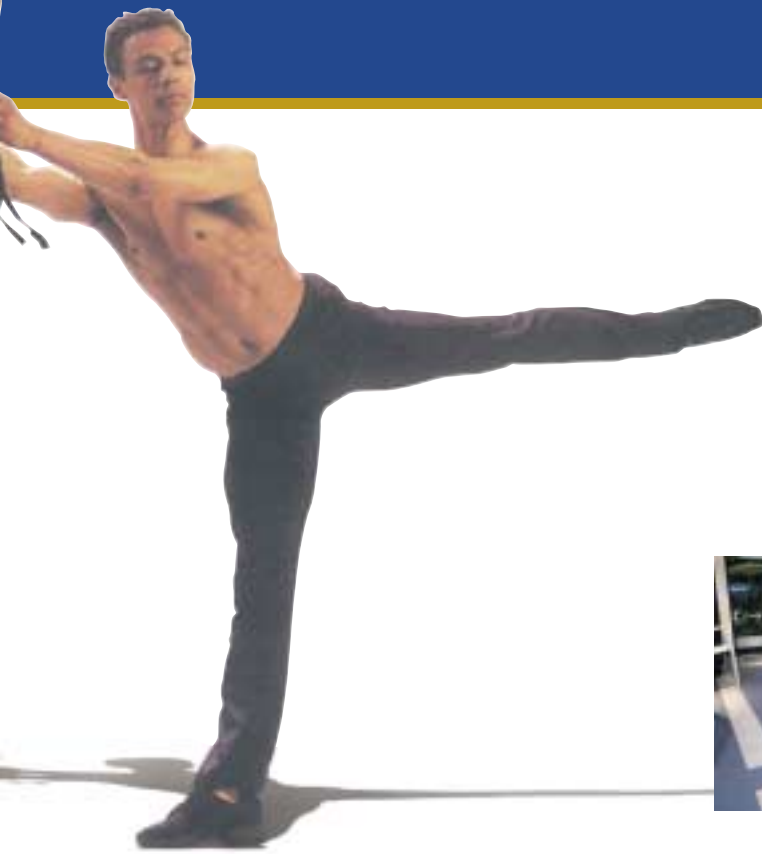
Altro were impressed enough to sign both the hardware and operating software contract with Prestige.

A clustered HP UNIX platform

At the heart of the Prestige proposal was a high availability Service Guard Cluster, operating across two computer rooms at widely separated locations on the Altro site. The distributed solution was designed to offer business continuity in case of fire or localised power failure, without having to move critical computing systems off-site.

“It’s a very complex mix. A pioneering set-up in many ways,” Andrew points out. “Prestige were one of the very few companies – if not the only one – who could do all the things we needed. They built the hardware, built up our UNIX system, built the Oracle database and also built our start up J.D. Edwards software environment.”

“This sort of ‘one-stop shop’ was a real advantage to us. It was a delivered solution. We could have done some of this ourselves, of course, but it was quicker and easier to leave it to Prestige with their trained engineers.”



A resounding success

The system went to full initial availability in February 2002. After the handover, Prestige provided more than a week's on-site training to Andrew Houston's IT team.

Thanks to the highly skilled and detailed work carried out at every stage, Altro say their new system is a resounding success. "Prestige came back a few times to fine-tune a few aspects but, overall, things worked very well from the start," says Andrew.

Customising ability is key

The business benefits of the new solution will make an immediate and positive impact on Altro Floors.

"Customising ability is the key advantage," says Andrew. "If we have new order process streams coming on, we're highly confident that we can add them or amend them on the run. As a business we can move forward to CRM, multicurrency, e-trading and others... none of these could be run on our old system."

There are other benefits too, Andrew points out. "The new solution has integrated things that weren't integrated before. It gives us potential to have total coverage of all our business activities. We should spend less time on administration, we will generate more usable information and gain more management control. Potentially, we will have also reduced maintenance and development costs and – over time – reduced the total cost of ownership."

Andrew's final word on Prestige?

“ *We continue to have a very good relationship with the Prestige guys. They were close to the project on the initial build phases – and still are. In fact, since April 2003, Prestige have taken prime ownership of managing our hardware maintenance contract. They're not here every day. They don't need to be. But we know they're there when we do need them.* **”**

At a glance - Technical highlights

- HP Storage Area Network
- HP Surestore Virtual Array VA7400
- HP Surestore Tape Library
- Two HP Brocade Switches
- J.D. Edwards OneWorld
- Oracle8i
- Two HP Server rp5400s
- Implementation by Prestige
- Infrastructure design by Prestige and HP

For more information:

To find out more about the solution featured in this case study or about how Prestige could help you, call us now on

0121 585 5111

or, visit us at

www.prestige-systems.co.uk

Business benefits

- Customisation and flexibility
- Greater integration of key business systems
- Less administration
- Greater quality of management control
- Potentially lower maintenance and development costs
- Reduced total cost of ownership
- Improved customer service through faster delivery
- Fully protected business-critical data
- Data storage more easily managed across multiple platforms
- Increased speed of data availability and access



business partner



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