



## Secure application infrastructure improves customer service and reduces business risk

By installing a new stable and reliable IT infrastructure, Menzies Distribution has enabled a new business critical application to be deployed; improved customer service; reduced costs and minimised business risk.



### Menzies Distribution

Part of John Menzies plc, Menzies Distribution is one of the UK's leading providers of distribution and marketing services for the newspaper and magazine industry.

Each day Menzies distributes more than 2.5 million magazines, covering more than 3,000 different titles, and 4 million newspapers to over 23,000 retail customers. In addition, the company provides marketing services to retailers and publishers, such as sales promotions, range management and merchandising services to help maximise sales revenues. The organisation's retail customers range from small corner shops to the large supermarket chains.

Menzies Distribution uses 1,400 vehicles covering 93,000 miles a day and employs over 4,000 employees. It currently has around one third of the UK market share in the newspaper and magazine supply chain industry.

### The Challenge

The newspaper and magazine supply chain industry is highly competitive and effectively managing the distribution of magazine titles is crucial to Menzies in order to maintain their market position. By effectively managing the statistics they have relating to retail outlets, magazines and sales patterns, Menzies can help increase sales and reduce the amount of unsold stock.

Menzies recognised that its existing data analysis system was outdated and as a result, their in-house IT team developed a new business critical application called i-Mag, to manage the vast amount of data and statistics generated about their 3000 plus magazine titles. As well as interpreting overall sales and returns figures for each title, i-Mag was also designed to analyse data relating to individual shops and the geographical trends for each area. Menzies realised however, that their distributed IT infrastructure wasn't capable of effectively supporting the new application and that they would need to invest in a new, stable and secure, centralised infrastructure in order to deploy the application and deliver improved services to their customers.

The complex logistical exercise performed by Menzies in delivering its 2.5 million magazine copies, also meant that the business couldn't afford any downtime in its systems. Any break in the service would affect their ability to deliver their titles across the UK and the new infrastructure would therefore need to be incredibly stable; provide effective disaster recovery; and be seamlessly implemented, to ensure a consistent service throughout.

### Esteem Systems

Esteem Systems is a leading supplier of IT services and holds a large number of accreditations with some of the most renowned technology organisations in the world. As a Principal Sun Partner, Esteem has the ability to deliver complex infrastructure solutions and full lifecycle services including consultancy, design and implementation as well as post implementation support, maintenance and managed services.

With more than twenty years of experience, Esteem works in both the private and public sector, installing, monitoring and managing some of the most complex IT infrastructures in the UK. Esteem's employees are highly trained and share a unique passion for driving real business improvements through the use of advanced IT systems and services.

## Solution Overview:

### Hardware:

- 2 x Sun Fire Servers
- Sun StorEdge SAN
- Sun StorEdge Tape Library

### Software:

- Solaris 10
- Sun Cluster 3.0
- Oracle Enterprise Database
- Sun EBS Backup
- i-Mag (in-house application)

### Lifecycle Services:

- Design
- Consultancy
- Installation
- Project management
- Knowledge transfer

### Benefits:

- Reduced cost of operation
- Improved efficiency
- Greater reliability
- Improved management of data
- Higher quality of service for customers
- Ease of management

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case study



## The Business Solution

Menzies Distribution worked with Esteem Systems from an early stage in the project to design a new IT infrastructure capable of handling both the large amounts of data generated and the complex algorithms associated with their i-Mag application. To ensure the solution was totally compatible with i-Mag, Esteem worked closely with the in-house application development team at Menzies.

Having considered a number of different IT solutions, it was agreed that the new infrastructure should be based on a Sun server environment running Solaris 10 operating system and using an Oracle database. Menzies chose the Sun based infrastructure because it was reliable, scalable and could handle the large volumes of data required.

Esteem created the technical design and specifications for an application-ready environment using their knowledge of both the Menzies organisation and the i-Mag application. A storage and back-up system was also included in the technical design using a Sun StorEdge SAN and a Sun StorEdge tape system. The design phase of the project also involved a benchmarking exercise to ensure the solution proposed compared well with industry standards.

Once the design and benchmarking was complete, Esteem then carefully project managed the installation of the new infrastructure before migrating all the data across to the new system. Esteem also undertook a knowledge transfer process to ensure that Menzies' IT team was fully equipped to manage the server, storage and database systems going forward.

Alan Sutherland, Menzies Distribution's Technical Service Manager, said: “The new i-Mag application was designed to fundamentally change the way we work and improve the efficiency of our organisation, so we needed to work with a company that understood our business and the in-house application we have. Because i-Mag is a unique, bespoke application, we needed a unique, bespoke solution to enable us to deploy it. That's exactly what Esteem provided us with.”

## The Result:

The new IT infrastructure was installed on time and within budget and the i-Mag application is now successfully up and running. Menzies Distribution now has a robust infrastructure and can analyse business critical information using more complex statistical algorithms.

Menzies can now calculate allocations of their 3000 magazine titles more accurately, reducing the volume of customer returns and improving the efficiency of their daily distribution of 2.5 million publications. By ensuring that the right magazine titles are in the right retail environment, in the right quantity, they have also increased sales for their retail and publishing customers.

Gerry Coyle, Senior IT Project Manager for Menzies, said: “We've had very good feedback from our retail customers and from publishers since the new system was launched. They have noticed a real difference and i-Mag is helping them achieve better sales results, which ultimately helps secure our market position.”

The centralised infrastructure has enabled the application to run on one site, instead of the previous twenty five, which has reduced the performance loads from local hubs, allowing the organisation to run their other applications more effectively. It has also reduced the time and resources required to manage the system and improved performance.

The installation of the back-up and recovery system has helped reduce the risk to the business. In addition, the in-house training by Esteem has provided Menzies' IT team with the skills required to rebuild the system in case of an emergency and has also improved day to day standard working practices to ensure the system remains robust.

Alan Sutherland adds: “Esteem has been very professional and all the work done has been to a high standard. We have a great relationship with Esteem and their knowledge has helped us at every stage of the project.”

The success of the project means that Menzies Distribution is now looking to replicate the success of their upgraded magazine allocation system with a similar application to deliver a more accurate newspaper allocation system.