

MIDLANDHR

MidlandHR works with Esteem to open new business doors

MidlandHR takes great pride in its market-leading fully integrated HR and Payroll Solution. However, with increasing demand from prospects of all sizes to provide a fully managed or hosted payroll and HR service, the IT infrastructure MidlandHR uses to deliver such services came under the microscope.



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With its core competence in software and applications, MidlandHR required a strategic IT infrastructure partner to facilitate the demand with a class leading hosted solution focusing on scalability, availability and rapid deployment. Following consultation, design and implementation with systems integrator Esteem, MidlandHR is now able to offer a highly competitive managed HR and payroll service to organisations of varying size. The company has also:

- Lowered bottom line IT running costs by consolidating servers
- Reduced its carbon footprint with effective use of storage and virtualisation technologies
- Improved disaster recovery and resilience by implementing two storage area networks (SAN) with fibre connectivity
- Increased business agility and competitiveness with systems enabling faster bid response times and broadening its target market
- Enabled rapid deployment of solutions

MidlandHR

MidlandHR is an independent company and was founded in 1984 to provide integrated payroll and people management services. The organisation has rapidly expanded its product and service portfolio to become a leading provider of human resource management software and services.

MidlandHR enables organisations to incorporate all human resource activities, which have traditionally been managed separately – such as absence monitoring and payments, training administration, car benefits and recruitment – into a single system.

Responding to Need

MidlandHR was determined to respond to the needs of its customers and stay competitive in the business-critical payroll arena. This meant offering more choice in the way its HR and payroll solution, known as iTrent, could be implemented. iTrent could already be purchased as a standalone application for customers to manage themselves, or as a hosted service but the latter option was less competitive and something needed to be done. IT industry analysts Gartner, predict that one third of all business application software will be bought in this way, as a service rather than a product licence, by 2012.

Being able to offer a wider range of hosted HR and Payroll, including Fully Managed Payroll, would meet MidlandHR's business objectives. However, with its existing IT infrastructure proving expensive to run, the costs of offering a wide range of solutions, including fully managed payroll services, prohibited MidlandHR from competitively targeting small to medium sized enterprises. The company realised it needed to change its IT infrastructure to compete effectively in the market.

"Payroll and HR are business-critical, backbone functions of any company. All organisations with employees need payroll and HR functionality to run properly," comments Rohen Farmer, MIS Manager at MidlandHR.

Understanding the Challenge

To be able to offer hosted iTrent services including fully managed payroll facilities, meant MidlandHR had to revamp its outdated IT infrastructure. This involved a significant redesign of its disaster recovery infrastructure to eradicate risk, as well as addressing internal data processing and storage issues. With several separate systems holding over one and a half terabytes of data, which was not optimised, the company was also fast running out of physical storage space and desperately needed to reduce its energy consumption and carbon footprint.

"The IT systems we were using to deliver services to customers were disparate, which caused delays to our response times and the inability to process customer data dynamically," explains Farmer. "Green computing has also become a vital factor for competitiveness, as customers look for a company's green credentials before engaging its services. Now, a primary objective with any new system is to meet our environmental and energy consumption reduction targets and pass these savings onto our customers."

MidlandHR needed to consolidate its IT infrastructure, maximise its existing assets and invest further in disaster recovery to ensure IT was not an inhibiting factor for growth or service delivery and continuity. This would ensure companies of varying size would be able to outsource payroll and hosted HR fully to MidlandHR and be confident that these important services are managed reliably and cost effectively.

System Details:

Services

Lifecycle services provided by Esteem include strategic consultancy, design, implementation and installation as well as ongoing support and maintenance.

Hardware

- Sun Enterprise Server
- 2 x NetApp Storage Area Networks

Software

- NetApp SnapManager
- NetApp Snap Mirror
- NetApp FlexClone
- Solaris

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Rohen Farmer
MIS Manager



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Choosing Experience

MidlandHR understands that its IT infrastructure is a strategic architecture for the entire business. Working in partnership with Sun Microsystems and NetApp, systems integrator Esteem, designed and built an infrastructure around the needs of MidlandHR. Esteem understands the independent software vendor market and its expert team worked with MidlandHR to deliver a future-proof, scalable solution.

“Esteem took time with us to understand our estate, our forecasts and the needs of the business going forward,” explains Farmer. “The team had the right expertise, excellent vendor relationships and a thorough support plan for ongoing services to ensure the architecture was flexible enough to suit our growth requirements and enable us to deliver effective managed payroll and HR services to our customers.”

Storage space and disaster recovery were key objectives to enable MidlandHR to manage iTrent fully for its customers. Esteem therefore focused infrastructure changes on the implementation of two storage area networks (SAN) – one at the primary site for storage and one at the disaster recovery site for backup – as well as the consolidation of MidlandHR’s servers to provide secure, remote access to confidential business critical data and reduce energy consumption and costs.

Implementing Change

Six power-hungry servers were consolidated into one Sun Enterprise server, with data moved onto a SAN to make best use of disk space and reduce air conditioning and cooling requirements dramatically. Virtualisation of the application and database layers using Solaris, ensured MidlandHR made the most of its CPUs, reducing the company’s carbon footprint and lowering bottom line costs.

Disaster recovery planning has improved significantly with the implementation of the two fibre-connected NetApp SANs with scalable storage backup at MidlandHR’s secondary site. MidlandHR now has the hardware and storage space required to bring new customers on board quickly, as well as access, amend, transport, save, and upgrade existing data dynamically and easily. The resilient infrastructure enables secure web-based application delivery and helps MidlandHR maintain its competitive advantage as the fully managed payroll service model gathers momentum.

Rewarding Results

The IT infrastructure and consultancy from Esteem has increased MidlandHR’s agility, enabling them to be at the forefront of hosted Payroll and HR services. “Esteem has certainly taken away the headache of our IT infrastructure and made it look easy,” says Farmer.

MidlandHR is now able to offer a highly competitive managed payroll service to organisations of varying size, with systems that not only enable faster bid response times, but also open the door to smaller, less resource-rich organisations. In addition, the company has been able to lower bottom line IT running costs by consolidating servers, which has in turn reduced MidlandHR’s carbon footprint with more effective use of storage and virtualisation technologies.

“Esteem has helped us extend our target market and win business,” explains Farmer. “With more cost effective systems in place, we can now offer our solutions to the smaller markets, which we were less competitive in. Every new contract we win, Esteem is now wholeheartedly part of the process. Our companies are extremely complementary.”

Supporting Role

Esteem provides ongoing support for MidlandHR’s Sun server infrastructure to ensure maximum performance. This is vital for MidlandHR to offer its iTrent application as a fully managed payroll service. With customers demanding 24/7 service, MidlandHR requires the same cooperation from Esteem to optimise its systems.

“We receive a high level of personal service from Esteem and a quick turnaround on our requests,” continues Farmer. “The initial strategic consultancy from Esteem ensured we implemented a scalable solution for us to maintain manageability as our customers’ requirements grow,” concludes Farmer.

MidlandHR is committed to making environmentally conscious purchases with regards to its IT infrastructure. Going forward, MidlandHR and Esteem will be looking at the most effective archiving and bulk storage solutions for the company and its customers.