



Setting the standard in the Society

With over 30 branches and 500 members of staff, The Nottingham Building Society set itself an ambitious target to improve its business agility, communication and competitiveness with a new IT strategy and a completely new IT infrastructure. In order to achieve this, The Nottingham had to align its core IT systems and infrastructure to business objectives and review every single one of its existing processes.



Since selecting systems integrator, Esteem, to work with them as a strategic partner on this ambitious project, The Nottingham has been able to:

- Improve customer service and branch communication
- Improve business continuity with a new data centre and disaster recovery centre
- Increase competitive advantage and business agility
- Maintain regulatory compliance with a new mortgage system
- Reduce data recovery time from 35 hours to one hour
- Simplify IT management with automated processes and single sign on

The Nottingham

The Nottingham is one of the UK's top twenty building societies with assets of over £2 billion. As a mutual building society – and with recent customer surveys recording an overall satisfaction score of over 93 per cent – The Nottingham prides itself on being able to build strong and lasting relationships with customers, as well as providing a high standard of customer service.

The Customer Society

Savings and mortgages have been the core products offered by The Nottingham since its establishment in 1849. The company has won several industry awards for the quality of its mortgage services and financial advice, but in today's fiercely competitive financial services market, the Society realised further improvements were required to increase flexibility in product range; enhance both external (customer) and internal (branch and head office) communication; and maintain competitive advantage.

"Customers are individuals and may find the branch experience and dealing with a person preferable to interacting online," explains Jack Cutts, Head of IT at The Nottingham. "We understand this. That's why we wanted to make our IT systems capable of offering customers total flexibility in how they conduct business with us."

The Nottingham faced a number of challenges in order to achieve this move from a product-centric to a customer-focused organisation. Its IT infrastructure needed updating in order to become a driver of business change and enable improved branch access and business continuity.

Regulated by the Financial Services Authority, The Nottingham's IT infrastructure also has to comply with stringent auditing requirements and the secure management of personal information. Transactional-based systems are business critical in the financial services market and require a 24/7/365 rapid recovery arrangement to ensure an agile, responsive organisation.

Driver for Change

The ultimate trigger for the review of the IT system was the decision to invest in specialist mortgage application software, Summit from TietoEnator. Summit is key to The Society's drive to improve customer service delivery, as it allows The Nottingham to offer online products and instant quotes, whilst also making it easier and quicker to add and change products within stringent FSA guidelines.

"Summit enables us to compete effectively in the aggressive mortgage market, remain compliant and improve customer service with additional online options," says Cutts. "We can also launch new products to the market quicker and at lower cost."

Raising the Bar

The Nottingham realised that changes needed to be made to its IT infrastructure and its overall IT strategy. "We had to raise the standard of IT and change the mindset and the attitude of the business towards the use of technology," explains Cutts. "We needed everyone to understand that it is not acceptable to have the email system down for three days or for it to take 35 hours to get data recovered. And this has been achieved."

System Details:

Services

Lifecycle services from Esteem that The Nottingham has benefited from include consultancy, design, project management, implementation and on-going support and management.

Hardware

- 14 Sun servers
- 2 Sun SANs with Cisco switches
- 2 Sun tape libraries
- NetApp Virtual Tape Library
- 33 IBM branch servers
- 53 IBM Blade servers

Software

- Citrix Presentation Server
- Citrix Access Gateway
- Citrix Password Manager
- Microsoft Exchange
- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft Windows Server, SQL, Office, Visio Pro
- VMware Virtual Infrastructure
- Symantec Netbackup
- IBM Websphere
- Santricity (Sun Replication software)

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Head of IT

case study



Removing the old way of thinking about IT and the fire fighting approach to system management meant a considerable change for the entire organisation, including the IT department. The IT team needed to move away from the mundane day to day tasks needed to keep systems running, such as unblocking emails and resetting passwords, and focus instead on implementing new systems that would drive the business forward.

The Society required a clear IT strategy to gain consistency, stability, security and consolidate its hardware and software. Building a strategic partnership with one IT supplier that understood the needs of a growing building society was key to meeting this objective. “Picking the right partner was a challenge in itself,” says Cutts. “We needed complete confidence in our choice, therefore we took the time to find the right one.”

Right Partner, Right System

Systems integrator, Esteem, had the right expertise, the right relationships – including a strong track record working with TietoEnator – and the right consultative approach for The Nottingham. Esteem and The Nottingham worked together in partnership to review the existing systems and design and implement a new IT infrastructure that would transform The Nottingham and its entire business processes.

The infrastructure improvements included implementing a new network, a storage area network (SAN) and a disaster recovery centre with a NetApp virtual tape library (VTL). In addition to replacing the core savings and mortgage system with Summit, The Nottingham implemented a new version of Microsoft Windows Server, Microsoft Active Directory, Microsoft Exchange Server and Citrix Presentation Server for improved branch access.

“We built a new data centre and introduced virtualisation based on VMware technology for test and development giving us greater stability going forward,” adds Cutts. “Our security systems have been upgraded and we have replaced every server and PC in the business. We have also have trained every member of staff. This is no mean feat, as almost every process in the business has changed.”

Esteem designed, implemented and project managed the development of the entire new infrastructure, including servers, storage and software, as well as migrating the data to the new system.

The Results

The Nottingham has simplified and improved IT management with centralised systems and automated management processes. “We found when we undertook our initial review that the main time sappers for the support team were unblocking emails with attachments and resetting passwords as users had to remember eight different passwords which each needed changing every 30 days,” says Cutts. “We’ve now completely automated email management and introduced secure single sign on for all users, freeing up the IT team to concentrate on strategic business objectives.”

Team performance and moral within IT has increased as the focus is no longer on fire fighting and maintaining old systems, but delivering new services which are driving forward The Nottingham’s business. It also has the flexibility to add and change products quickly which ensures the company remains agile and competitive and helps to improve the total customer experience.

Data recovery times have been significantly reduced from 35 hours to just one with the installation of the data recovery centre and VTL. An end-to-end training system is also in place for ongoing training and development.

Thanks to Esteem, The Nottingham now has a secure and resilient infrastructure to eliminate downtime and provide the 24/7 accessibility necessary to compete in the fast-paced financial market.

“I’m delighted with the new infrastructure and with our strategic partnership with Esteem,” concludes Cutts. “In my view, IT should just work seamlessly within an organisation, running in the background and keeping the business moving forward. If I never hear anyone talk about the IT, then I am happy and we know we’ve done our job.”

The Future

Esteem remains the single-point of contact for The Nottingham’s entire IT infrastructure. Service level agreements are in place, which are governed by Esteem’s ITIL approach to service management alongside ongoing consultancy services. The two companies continue to work closely to ensure the new infrastructure performs at optimum levels and delivers on-going value to the business.