

Hire Company Cuts IT Costs with Switch from Open Source

Market leader Speedy Hire improves return on investment and reduces costs by switching from open-source software to Microsoft® products, and choosing a Microsoft Volume Licensing programme.

“Microsoft Dynamics AX and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 give us the increased security, integration, and productivity—as well as a solid e-mail and directory structure—to build our future.”

James Fleming, Infrastructure Manager, Speedy Hire

With a turnover of £335.5 million (U.S. \$701.7 million), Speedy Hire is the leading tool and equipment hire company in the United Kingdom (U.K). Its 5,000 employees offer an efficient service through more than 500 depots throughout the U.K. and Ireland.

Since its creation in 1977, the group has expanded into different markets and sectors, largely by taking over competitors such as, most recently, the tool-hire division of Hewden Stuart. These successful takeovers left Speedy Hire at the head of unreliable, heterogeneous software environments, all running independently from one another.

“By replacing open-source software with Microsoft products for all our basic IT functions, we have laid a foundation that will help us move forward and make some of the more dramatic and exciting business improvements currently on our radar.”

James Fleming, Infrastructure Manager, Speedy Hire

Disparate Technologies and High Costs

Microsoft Office 2003 had been used within the main business for several years but not in the company's depots. Here the key technology tools

were Linux and open-source office products—but there were some challenges with these tools.

James Fleming, Infrastructure Manager at Speedy Hire, says: “The personal computers in the depots had come to the end of their natural life and needed replacing. They were running on Linux, with a compatible tailored e-mail system and open-source office products for word processing and communications between the main business and the depots. The system we used to hire out equipment was MCS-Insitu, which is a green-screen application without graphics. There was no integration between any of these systems.”

Speedy Hire found the support costs for Linux excessive. “It's very hard to get good support for Linux,” says Fleming. “We had no internal support resources, and outsourcing the support was expensive. More than that, it put an extra dimension between us and our customers, making us less reactive to what they required.”

Ten Active Directory Databases and E-Mail Addresses

Speedy Hire is a fast-growing organisation, not least because of a number of acquisitions in recent years. It currently comprises 10 companies, all of



Customer
Speedy Hire

Web Site
www.speedyhire.co.uk

Number of Employees
5,000

Country or Region
United Kingdom

Industry
Rental

Customer Profile
Founded in 1977, Speedy Hire is the leading tool and equipment hire company in the United Kingdom. It employs around 5,000 people across 500 depots and has a turnover of £335.5 million.

Software and Services
Windows XP
▪ Windows XP Embedded
Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
▪ Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
Microsoft Office
▪ 2007 Microsoft Office system
▪ Microsoft Office 2003
Microsoft Dynamics
▪ Microsoft Dynamics AX



people  ready

which operate under the Speedy Hire banner. But each of these ran its own Active Directory® technology, and there was an urgent need to consolidate to a single directory across the organisation.

“Our existing e-mail system was very basic, with no useful additional functionality such as calendar sharing or a global address list, or any of the other features we have since come to rely on using Microsoft Exchange Server 2007,” says Fleming. “One of our problems was that we were operating 10 different e-mail addresses. We wanted to switch to a single, identifiable address as quickly as possible.”

A Higher Return on Investment

Speedy Hire decided to switch to a Microsoft environment across the board. The first stage was to change the hire application to Microsoft Dynamics™ AX, in what was one of the organisation’s biggest IT projects to date. “Microsoft Dynamics AX is an enterprise resource planning tool, but because our business has become more complex, with more requirements for management information, it fits the bill,” explains Fleming.

As part of this project, Speedy Hire replaced all of the computers in its depots, replacing Linux personal computers with Wyse V90 Winterterminals running Windows XP Embedded, and open-source office products with the 2007 Microsoft Office system. “We discovered that the personal computers required to roll out Windows XP Embedded operating system using Citrix were much cheaper than those required to run Linux,” says Fleming. “As soon as we looked at the cost over five years, we realised that we would get a far better return on investment.”

Integration and Support

Speedy Hire also looked to acquire a new e-mail system. “We looked at all the competition, including Lotus Notes, and went through a formal selection process,” says Fleming. “We perceived Microsoft to be the market leader for several reasons, specifically the reliability of its products, and the

ongoing technical support we were assured of receiving. At Speedy Hire we are driven by a desire to choose best of breed in everything we do.”

Speedy Hire chose Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 as its e-mail system and the company is in the process of implementing a single, standard e-mail address across the organisation.

“Communications both within the organisation, and into the organisation from outside, are so much simpler and more intuitive now that we can all be contacted at speedyhire.com,” says Fleming.

Fleming’s favourite aspects of using Microsoft technology are the compatibility of the products with other technology and the support available. “I was always slightly sceptical about the degree of input we could expect from Microsoft around the core products, but I’ve been very pleasantly surprised by the support we’ve received,” he says.

Cheaper Licensing Options

Speedy Hire has reduced its licensing costs by 20 per cent. “We moved to a different banding in our existing Select Agreement, and then switched some areas to an Enterprise Agreement,” says Fleming. “The Enterprise Agreement will save us a lot of money by consolidating licensing. It will also make the administration of licensing much simpler, faster, and cheaper, because we only have to pay once a year and raise one purchase order.”

“Of course, with open-source software such as Linux, there are no licences. But it also lacks automatic updates, support, compatibility, and someone responsible for dealing with maintenance. Our life was much harder using open-source software.”

“The level of support from both Microsoft and the implementing partner has been excellent. Microsoft has been great at offering the services of its technical team when we’ve needed them, and at ensuring that we’re dealing with the right partner.”

A Foundation for the Future

“By replacing open-source software with Microsoft products for all our basic IT functions, we have laid a foundation that will help us move forward and

make some of the more dramatic and exciting business improvements currently on our radar,” says Fleming.

“Microsoft Dynamics AX and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 give us the increased security, integration, and productivity—as well as a solid e-mail and directory structure—to build our future.”

Speedy Hire will continue to evaluate new Microsoft products as part of an ongoing strategy.

“We are impressed with the new interface and functionality of Windows Vista,” says Fleming.

“Although we don’t currently have the resources for a full rollout, in future we may release new computers with Windows Vista instead of Windows XP.”

Microsoft Server Product Portfolio

For more information about the Microsoft server product portfolio, go to:

www.microsoft.com/servers/default.aspx

Microsoft Office System

The Microsoft Office System is the business world’s chosen environment for information work, providing the programs, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact.

For more information about the Microsoft Office System, please visit:

www.microsoft.com/office

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what’s most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to:

www.microsoft.com/dynamics

For more information on People Ready Business and how it can help your business please visit:

<http://www.microsoft.com/business/peopleready>