



Reduce Complexity

Improve Flexibility

Service Catalogue

Enable Automation

Kingston University optimises its TSM environments with full support from Tectrade

Challenge

Introduce enterprise-class data backup and recovery for more than 300 servers, and yet eliminate the cost, effort and risk of per-machine backup; keep long-term support costs low and tap into best-of-breed expertise; enable recovery in case of failure or disaster at the data centre.

Solution

Kingston University engaged Tectrade to optimise and expand its existing IBM Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM) environment, and chose Tectrade's TSM Extended Support Services to guarantee availability. Tectrade later added a second TSM environment for added resiliency.

Benefits

Centralised backup managed by Tectrade frees up internal staff from routine jobs; second tier of backup ensures recoverability in the event of disaster; Kingston University gains access to deep pool of Tivoli skills at low cost; original TSM environment ran for three years requiring only one upgrade despite rapid data growth..

Founded in 1899 as Kingston Technical Institute, Kingston University in south-west London today has more than 18,000 students and 2,000 permanent staff. The university is split into four campuses in and around Kingston upon Thames, and has seven faculties, subdivided into 26 schools. With a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses across sciences, arts and humanities, Kingston University was ranked first among new universities in London in 2006 by The Guardian.

As demand for computing services grew at Kingston University, servers were added in a number of locations – and not always under the supervision of the IT department. Not all servers had backup solutions, and it was difficult and time-consuming to manage those that did have tape drives attached. This decentralised environment was inefficient and costly to manage, and there was no real guarantee that all data was being backed up and could be restored successfully.

“Our TSM environment has been rock-solid since we started working with Tectrade,” says Roberto Volo. “All of their consultants have extremely high skill levels, and a couple are absolutely exceptional engineers. A major advantage is that they are totally specialised in the areas of storage, backup and recovery, so there’s no dilution of their skills or focus.”

Roberto Volo, Kingston University

Infrastructure Objectives

Data Protection

- Enterprise Backup & Recovery
- Monitoring & Support

Key Deliverables

- Centralised and managed service reduces administration time
- Access to skills at low cost
- Highly scalable

Kingston University chose IBM Tivoli Storage Manager software for backup and recovery, moving from a per-server backup model to a centralised model. The initial implementation covered 150 servers with 5TB of data, and the implementation partner proposed three-monthly updates to handle the anticipated growth of the solution.

"The original implementation was poorly executed by the partner, and the resulting solution was simply not fit for purpose," says Roberto Volo, Head of Infrastructure at Kingston University. "We needed a new partner to get us back on an even keel, and Tectrade came highly recommended. The Tectrade team provided three days' free pre-consultancy work to understand the problem and propose a solution, and showed an impressive willingness to pick up someone else's mess and fix it."

Superior support at lower cost

Tectrade tweaked and optimised the existing TSM implementation, rapidly delivering significant improvements in performance and availability. The university then engaged Tectrade as its full-time partner for the TSM environment, choosing Tectrade's TSM Extended Support Services offering.

Working with Tectrade, Kingston University has access to top-quality support around the clock. It would be prohibitively expensive for the university to directly employ enough skilled personnel to enable the same level of cover. Says Roberto Volo, "The support offered by Tectrade is far superior to the capabilities we had before, and at a lower price. Buying Tivoli support as a service from Tectrade also gives us cover every day of the year. We have our own highly skilled personnel, but they are spread very thinly. Working with Tectrade frees up these employees to focus on higher-value tasks, and gives us enormous confidence that our data is protected."

Two-tier solution

Thanks to the optimisation work carried out by Tectrade, the TSM environment at Kingston University ran for three years before requiring an update – despite the original partner's assessment that three-monthly updates would be required. Says Roberto Volo, "Upgrades are always costly, disruptive and risky, so you do your best to avoid them. Tectrade enabled us to push our original investment to the limits and get superb value out of it."

As part of the year-three upgrade, Tectrade implemented new TSM servers in the main data centre, and moved the old environment to a second site to provide additional resiliency in the event of a disaster. "The idea behind the second site was very simple: what's the point of backup if there's nowhere to restore the data?" says Roberto Volo. "Previously, if we had lost the main site in a disaster, we would have had all the data but no servers on which to restore it. With two tiers of backup in separate locations, we can now restore all data within hours even if we lose a whole data centre."

The two TSM environments at Kingston University now back up around 300 servers holding more than 40TB of live data, and manage a further 20TB of historical data.

Rock-solid availability

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Kingston University is now negotiating a renewed support contact, and will increase the level of responsibility that Tectrade has for its TSM environment – showing the trust that has built up between the two organisations.

"In any relationship there are always glitches – it's how you recover that's important," says Roberto Volo. "Tectrade are open in identifying issues, they move quickly to resolve them, and they put policies in place to make sure they don't happen again. A major differentiator for Tectrade is that they insist on the highest standards, even to the point of being willing to turn down business if they feel a client's decision will result in inferior service. All the Tectrade consultants know the standards that are expected and they maintain them, which gives us confidence that Tectrade is protecting our best interests."

Vendor Alliances on this project

Brocade
Nexan
Tectrade Support Services
Tivoli

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Head Office & Customer Centre
No.1&2 Godalming Business Centre
Woolsack Way
Godalming, Surrey
GU7 1XW
Tel. +44 (0)1483 861448
Fax. +44 (0)1483 861449
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk

www.tectrade.co.uk

Northern Sales Office
Harrogate, Yorkshire
Tel. + 44 (0)1423 340942
Fax. + 44 (0)1423 340945
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk

Scottish Sales Office
Edinburgh, Scotland
Tel: +44 (0)131 718 6077
Fax: +44 (0)131 718 6100
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk

Netherlands Office
Tectrade BV
Brenkmanweg 8
4105 DH Culemborg
Nederland
Tel. +31 (0)345 547040
Fax. +31 (0)345 520422
Email. sales@tectrade.nl

www.tectrade.nl