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TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION

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Energy leader Total Gas & Power remove risk from their legacy technologies and prepare for a high-powered digital transformation.

“We needed to unlock the business value from our legacy technology,” says Dominic Maidment, Technology Architect of the UK-based energy firm, Total Gas & Power, which is part of the global super major, Total. As an architect in the Total electricity and gas business in the UK, Maidment and his team have ensured that valuable sales and billing systems housed on legacy technology can have a new lease on life as the company adopts cloud-based services to remain competitive in the energy market.

Total is best known as the French petrol-chemical company, but Total is also a major provider of electricity and gas in the UK, where Maidment is based. The architect explains Total Gas & Power delivers energy to commercial, industrial, and public sector business customers across the UK in the nation’s open energy market.

“It is a very dynamic market,” he says, going on to explain that one of the most significant customers for Total Gas & Power is supplying a network of commercial electric car charging points. “We are now filling punters’ cars up again,” he observes.



A great legacy

“We have 20 years of legacy databases, technology, and networks across technologies such as Oracle and Sun,” Maidment says of a wide-ranging estate that needed to be brought together and made accessible to cloud-based, customer-facing tools.

“Some of the legacy technology was not complementary to what we wanted to achieve as a business,” he says of how Total Gas & Power needed to create a modern infrastructure platform to support digital transformation and the use of multi-cloud operations that could support legacy applications as required.



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A diverse range of applications and equipment was beginning to pose maintenance and management challenges to the organization as a result of license stipulations, which in turn would pose migration issues if Total Gas & Energy simply tried to virtualize the legacy technologies. Meanwhile, other systems were coming out of their support lifecycle and could pose risks or create lengthy rebuild times if a fault was to take place. As a result, Total Gas & Power was looking to simplify the technology estate by reducing the number of platforms. Total Gas & Power needed to consolidate its workloads onto fewer platforms and reduce the operational overhead through centralized management platforms.

“We wanted to come off much of the legacy equipment that we still have, such as old Sun SPARC boxes and x86 systems, as we consolidate the datacenter. Essentially, we want to remove—if possible—our storage area network (SAN) and bring everything in, but it’s a complicated puzzle because there are so many things that hang off that SAN,” Maidment says.

At the core of the change program was digital transformation, allowing Total Gas & Energy to adopt a DevOps approach for developing and maintaining applications for the business. But in order to adopt DevOps, the infrastructure had to be modernized.





Architectural view

Total Gas & Power selected a stack of Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Software tools to transform the infrastructure of the energy company and provide the fuel for a DevOps culture. Maidment explained he and his team now have a Prism management console, Beam Multi-Cloud Governance for AWS and Azure environments, as well as NX Series hardware and disaster recovery to a Nutanix remote site. This stack of tools is responsible for 300 virtual machines that host middleware and applications for the billing, phone, business processes, and print requirements.

Speaking to the author at the Nutanix .NEXT event in Copenhagen, Maidment said the project is already saving Total Gas & Power money, and he expects a strong return on investment.

Maidment added that the strategic decision to partner with Nutanix was powered forward by the need for Total Gas & Power to replace its disaster recovery (DR) facilities. Previously, they had worked with

IBM using a facility that was about to be redeveloped. The Nutanix stack provides the energy firm with a layer of abstraction at the storage level. This abstraction layer removes the need for the business to provision and maintain separate storage hardware, providing the architect and Total Gas & Power with a simplified infrastructure that is easier to deploy and requires less support.

The new infrastructure demonstrated its business benefit when a third party organization Total Gas & Power worked with faced difficulties. Total Gas & Power was able to spin up an office in a weekend to serve customers of the third party and guarantee services from Total that the third party had agreed upon.

Maidment has been with Total Gas & Power since September 2013 when he joined the UK market energy supplier from a year in the technology supplier community. He first became a senior engineer and architect with information services business, McGraw Hill, where he spent nine years.

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