

IBM engineers a resilience strategy for Mott MacDonald

Overview

Customer challenge

Mott MacDonald was seeking to build a business case for investing in service continuity.

Solution

IBM carried out an assessment of the client's Disaster Recovery (DR), IT resilience and associated risks using IBM's Business Resilience Model. Having identified the key areas for improvement, IBM developed a roadmap to help the client address its resilience issues through a structured, clearly prioritised approach.

Customer benefits

- Achieved increased awareness of the key IT resilience and DR issues faced by the business.
- Provided the business with an improved model for considering resilience, risk and DR (IBM's Business Resilience Model).
- IBM acted as change agents, obtaining senior executive buy-in to a significant programme of investment in IT resilience and DR.



The Mott MacDonald Group delivers quality management engineering and development solutions across the globe, and is involved in the design of many high-profile projects ranging from pioneering offshore windfarms in Europe and America to award-winning buildings such as the Manchester Civil Justice Centre and the world's first combined Stormwater Management and Road tunnel (SMART) in Malaysia.

The company has been enjoying meteoric growth, doubling in size every 4-5 years by diversifying across a wide range of markets from education to transport and health to buildings. Expanding its office network into more than 40 countries, IT had become fundamental to Mott MacDonald's business. However, the scale of growth was putting increased pressure on its IT systems and increasing the risk of operational disruption.

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– Darren Russell, Global IT Director, Mott MacDonald

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It had several ad hoc resilience programmes in place for its key systems, but with the company operating around 15,000 projects at any one time, the need to strengthen its IT systems provision was of mounting importance to Mott MacDonald’s Global IT Director, Darren Russell.

Explaining why he needed to highlight the extent of the issue to the business, Russell says: “We were in the process of changing our IT service delivery processes and systems strategy to support a federated model and felt that a big disaster could cause us real problems. But because our IT systems were on the whole reliable it was difficult for the business to fully appreciate our concerns.”

Assessing the risks

IBM recommended a resiliency study to examine the issues and during a highly-focused 10-day engagement, used its Business Resilience Model to assess Mott MacDonald’s Disaster Recovery (DR) capability, its IT resilience, and associated risks.

IBM explored the company’s strategy, people, processes, applications and data, technology and facilities as part of an innovative six-layer approach. Every service the IT department provides spans the layers, with multiple dependencies within and between the layers, and a single failure in any one of the layers would render Mott MacDonald’s IT systems vulnerable.

The assessment, benchmarked against industry standards, identified risks across all of Mott MacDonald’s component layers, justifying Russell’s unease over the existing IT system’s provision for DR. Prime areas to focus on included DR infrastructure, the network and the server room.

To help the business understand the full extent of its needs regarding the server room, IBM carried out an independent benchmarking process from the Uptime Institute, a membership organisation recognised as a source of unbiased, vendor-neutral knowledge on global IT productivity. A number of resilience and risk issues were identified.

Russell says: “The high level of expertise and experience that IBM’s consulting team brought to this project exceeded our expectations.

“Although we were already aware of several resiliency issues, IBM’s structured and fully comprehensive report gave us a clear picture of the risk.

“Mott MacDonald’s trusted relationship with IBM was key to extracting the unvarnished facts, as we were confident about being open and frank across all sections of our business, our applications and our strategy.”

Roadmap shows the way

Having identified the key areas of concern, IBM developed a roadmap to help Mott MacDonald address its IT resilience and DR issues through a structured, clearly-prioritised approach.

As a direct result of the study, the business has given the programme its full backing, provided the necessary funds, and expanded the IT department to tackle each area.

A new service continuity steering group has been set up comprising senior members of the business and chaired by Mott MacDonald's Managing Director. High-level executive involvement in the business impact sessions is also helping to drive the move towards end-to-end resiliency.

Russell says: "IBM delivered exactly what they said they would, which was good news for us. Not only was the project carried out very quickly, it was extremely good value for money too.

"The provision of IBM's very qualified people has allowed the business to appreciate the full extent of our IT needs.

"Most importantly, IBM's structured approach led to backing by the business, which quickly recognised the significance of the findings and responded immediately."

IBM's prioritised roadmap is enabling the company to adjust its systems to provide a secure, streamlined service.

Secure future

Mott MacDonald has completed a full audit of its systems and, with IBM in an independent advisory role, is now addressing its Business Impact analysis, Business Continuity plans and laying the foundations for a new higher tier level data centre.

Russell concludes: "What we appreciated most about IBM was the tailored approach to our needs, and the expertise and professionalism of the consultants which made our people sit up and listen.

"The trust IBM instilled in the company meant we were totally confident that our issues would be dealt with properly.

"Our company is growing so rapidly that its increasingly important we ensure all our systems are as robust as possible. The IBM solution has enabled us to move forward with confidence towards a very secure position."

For more information

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