

“Having appointed Servo as our virtualisation partner, we were delighted with their solution.”

**STEVE SAVAGE**  
IT MANAGER, GOSSCHALKS



Gosschalks Solicitors is a commercially focussed law firm that considers itself to be at the cutting edge of what is a rapidly evolving legal world offering a fast, efficient, friendly and cost effective service. This has resulted in the development of good relationships with an ever expanding client base.

But expansion can bring its own challenges and the firm's IT servers were beginning to feel the strain of the raised work loads. Increases in throughput meant that the overnight backup window was starting to eat into the working day, with consequential impact on system performance.

**Indeed it wasn't just a problem with backups. As Steve Savage, Gosschalks IT Manager points out:**

*“Arranging downtime to perform routine yet essential hardware maintenance work used to be easy with most evenings and weekends being available to the IT Department. However, that is firmly a thing of the past. Our lawyers are now remotely accessing our Exchange server and Interwoven “matter centric” Document Management Systems from all manner of devices, from all over the country and beyond and at all hours of the day. We needed to implement solutions to allow the IT department to work around those demanding requirements, reducing the time needed to carry out such maintenance and minimising the risk to the business at the same time.*”

*In our industry, like many others, we host a number of bespoke applications which provide a challenge when it comes to patch management. We cannot simply throw the latest hot fix or service pack at them and hope for the best, because these are business critical applications. We needed an infrastructure which would allow greater control over the what, the when and the how of patch management, with a back-out and restore plan if things go wrong.”*

Clearly it was time to assess the IT infrastructure for its ability to support the needs of the business. Servo were engaged to help with the assessment and to address the shortfall using their expertise and the latest innovative technologies.

**According to Servo's Major Account Manager, Steve Churm:**

*“We were confident that we could help Gosschalks to meet their IT challenge. We took the time to understand Steve's requirements and came up with an innovative design to give Gosschalks the flexibility, responsiveness and resilience they needed.”*

The design involved a transformation of the server infrastructure, from Physical to Virtual to create a more dynamic server platform, which could be re-purposed for a variety of functions. This meant using VMware® Infrastructure 3.02 as the Virtual operating system platform.

**Reducing the risk of managing updates and patches**

Virtualisation can bring benefits which may not be immediately apparent, but it's important to have the vision to recognise the potential. In the case of patch management, the Servo IT architects were able to address the issues of patch management using the snapshot capability of virtualisation technologies. According to Steve Savage:



**SOLUTION SUMMARY**

With the help of Servo, Gosschalks Solicitors modernised its IT infrastructure through the use of Server virtualisation technologies.

**Benefits include:**

- Major savings in time and cost
- Vastly improved data backup performance
- Faster software deployment
- Improved systems availability

*“The success of our business means our dependence on technology and the demands for speed and quality of service, aligned with quick and secure access to matter related data, is ever growing. As our clients are constantly pushing their own boundaries, it stands to reason that we have to evolve and innovate in order to provide the level of service they quite rightly demand. Technology has a major role to play in this and system resilience and availability is at the forefront of our minds.”*

Steve Savage  
IT Manager



“Improves business resilience and positions itself for growth with a Virtual IT Infrastructure.”



*“Applying service packs to an old Windows 2000 server with a host of bespoke apps used to require hours of planning to ensure we had a fall back plan if things didn’t go to plan. Now, we simply snapshot the virtual server, carry out the necessary work and release the snapshot if successful. In the event of problems arising we simply revert back to our original state – all done with a couple of mouse clicks and in seconds.”*

#### The Benefits of Consolidation

The number of physical servers was reduced by 80% as the workloads were migrated across from the physical to the virtual environment. This in itself brought benefits in terms of reduced costs for maintenance, power supply and air conditioning. *“At a time when many companies are running out of data-centre power and air conditioning, we were able to shut down half of our air conditioning systems without compromising the Data-centre environment,”* says Steve Savage.

#### Backup and Restore

But it wasn’t just about cost savings. There were also some major operational benefits. For a start, backup was becoming a major overhead. The overnight backup run was taking too long and was encroaching into the business day. Something had to be done to take control and provide a level of headroom. With the assistance of the Servo design team, the backup process was restructured to enable backups to be taken during the working day, without affecting service levels. Using Vizioncore vRanger Pro as the enabling technology, the Servo team capitalised on the features of the newly virtualised server platform and SAN to design and build this truly innovative backup & restore solution.

Was Steve Savage concerned at the use of such innovative technologies? After all, Law firms are not usually noted for being at the forefront of technology. *“Not at all,”* says Steve: *“When I first met with Servo it became apparent that they would be able to provide me with whatever I needed, such was the depth of their knowledge on all matters discussed. I wasn’t limited to their preferred choice of solution, it was down to me to listen to the wide range of options they made available to me and to decide which best suited our firm... and for the right price!”*

#### Avoiding Disruption

Hardware failures tend to be rare these days. But they still occur and guarding against them can be a very expensive business. Once again, we see a benefit from the skilled use of virtualisation technologies. As Steve Savage says:

*“Hardware failures can be very disruptive. Previously, we would have had to plan downtime in order to replace failed server components, now all we do is place the faulty VMware® ESX host into maintenance mode, watch all its Virtual Machine (VM) workloads migrate to other suitable ESX Hosts, switch it off and deal with the repairs before switching back on and migrating VMs back. All this is done whilst our users carry on unaware of the work we are carrying out in the background.”*

#### Hidden Benefits

Some of the advantages of the new IT infrastructure were not immediately apparent and Steve Savage relates how the very valuable time of a software consultant was maximised recently.

*“We had a software consultant on site a month or so after we went live with our virtual infrastructure and he requested that we purchased, installed and configured a new server for one of the applications he was installing. Previously we would have been booking him in to come back a couple of weeks down the line once we had purchased additional hardware, installed into our racks and fully configured both the hardware and software – a long winded and expensive process. However, much to his surprise (and delight as he had travelled up from London), we deployed a new Virtual Windows 2003 Server in a matter of minutes from one of our templates. Backups for the new server were also taken care of simply by adding the new server to a group within VMware® VirtualCentre which our vRanger backup software selects for backup each evening – all done through the VMware® VirtualCentre server deployment wizard.”*

#### Why Servo?

Let’s leave the final word with Steve Savage:

*“When I first spoke with Servo, my initial view was that Virtualisation technology was not quite there yet, not quite ready for the demands of a modern busy law firm..... I was soon put straight on that score as they provided a number of impressive reference sites to prove the concept and returns they had so confidently talked about.*

*Having appointed Servo as our virtualisation partner, we were delighted with their solution. After thoroughly assessing our current infrastructure and future requirements, work soon began and a smooth and highly successful implementation ensued. Importantly, the Servo team ensured that our internal IT team were thoroughly involved at every stage ensuring a seamless handover to our IT operations department.”*

[www.servo.co.uk](http://www.servo.co.uk)