

HIGH AVAILABILITY HOSTING

High Availability Hosting helps business soar at travel hypermarket



From its beginnings in 1975 as a small but dynamic tour operator bringing groups from long-haul markets such as Asia into Europe, GTA has evolved to become one of the most successful wholesalers of hotels, ground travel products and group tours in the world.

With offices and representatives in 90 locations across the globe, GTA sources products from more than 45,000 travel suppliers, provides over 45,000 hotels and 150,000 destination services in more than 185 countries worldwide.

With its entire business dependent on the stability of its IT, GTA needed a partner that could provide the resilient infrastructure vital for the hosting of its production systems.

Since 2003, it has relied on Sungard Availability Services to keep its business running uninterrupted. Commenting on the solution it has put in place, Tony Gavin, Vice President, Vendor Management, remarks, “Our partnership with Sungard means we could lose our own HQ building and the business would carry on as normal.”

GTA relies on Sungard AS to host all of its live production systems at Sungard AS’s highly resilient London Technology Centre (LTC), retaining backup systems in-house. With Sungard AS managing centralised front and back end systems, including the allimportant reservation system that handles up to 100 million

searches a day, vice president, vendor management Tony Gavin is only half-joking when he says, “If Sungard goes down, our business goes down.”

GTA’s offices around the world use the centralised systems hosted at Sungard AS, which include reservations, bookings, finance and email, to keep daily business operations running. Tony Gavin remarks, “With so much riding on continuous availability of our systems and data, knowing Sungard is behind us enables me to sleep at night. Having that level of reliability, security and expertise gives me tremendous peace of mind. It’s a benefit that is recognised beyond IT, throughout the management team.”

Among the vital systems hosted at LTC is an XML application that opens up GTA’s vast hotel inventory to travel retailers across the globe who perform constant searches of its database. Tony Gavin explains, “Searches come in through the Sungard pipe, into the infrastructure and out again around the clock without us knowing anything about it – and that’s just the way it should be.”

Business challenge

GTA, the B2B fully independent travel brand of the Kuoni’s Global Travel Services division is a world leader in the wholesale supply of hotels, ground travel products and group tours to the travel industry. It is heavily reliant on a resilient IT infrastructure to handle the 21,000 bookings it handles online every day. With downtime calculated to cost £6 per second, high availability of its IT systems is absolutely critical.

Solution

- High Availability Hosting
- Intelligent Hands
- Managed Internet Bandwidth
- Workplace Recovery
- Project Management.

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Business benefits

- High availability of critical systems and data
- Prevents considerable financial loss
- Protects GTA's reputation as an industry leader
- Peace of mind for GTA and its travel partners
- Compliance with applicable legislation.

Although its recent change of ownership means GTA no longer has a statutory obligation to comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation applicable to US companies, it continues to uphold SOX standards and, as an important part of its IT strategy, LTC is subject to regular third party audits. Tony Gavin notes, “We looked at various competitors at renewal time to compare what was out there but no one else could match Sungard's infrastructure and service. Certainly, everyone we bring in to inspect the LTC facility is very impressed.”

GTA prides itself on the customer care it gives both its travel partners and travellers and operates a 24-hour helpline service for those who find themselves in difficulties on a trip anywhere in the world. It contracts a small number of Workplace Recovery positions from Sungard AS to ensure continuity of this essential service in the event its own offices are unavailable for any reason.

Tony Gavin values the relationship that has developed between the various Sungard AS specialists and his close-knit IT team over the years. He says, “My team is very active and knows what they are doing so when we need help, we really need help. We're very fussy about who we work with because of that – not many people get through our door. But I find the Sungard team very proactive, knowledgeable and professional and my team enjoys working with them.”

He adds, “Having been instrumental in that original decision to choose Sungard all those years ago, I'm pleased it has been vindicated. It's a great relationship.”

About Sungard Availability Services

Sungard Availability Services provides managed IT services, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software, and disaster recovery services. To learn more, visit www.sungardas.co.uk or call 0800 143 413

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