

# CONTINUOUS UPTIME, TRANSACTION INTEGRITY, ENABLES NPOWER TO DELIVER ONLINE SERVICES FOR ITS 3M CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS



**When one of Britain's largest energy suppliers needed to ensure around-the-clock availability and security of its transactional website, they chose Sungard Availability Services (Sungard AS) to provide managed cloud services – a resilient and scalable private cloud platform that keeps their infrastructure available and secure.**

## SOLUTIONS

- Managed Cloud
- Security
- Disaster recovery services
- Backup services

## RESULTS

- Rapid fail-over to offsite, fully replicated production environment
- Faster provisioning, on-demand scalability
- Increased website security and resiliency

**“ What makes Sungard AS stand out from other providers is its level of response.”**

**Ian Jordan**

*Digital Operations Manager, npower*



## ABOUT THE COMPANY

**npower** is one of Britain's leading energy companies, serving three million residential and business accounts with electricity and gas. It is now part of the E.ON group, a European utility that runs one of the world's largest investor-owned electric utility service providers. For further information about npower please visit [npower.com](http://npower.com), or the npower sites on Facebook, Twitter (@npowerhq) and YouTube.





## THE CHALLENGE

### Maintaining a constant state of readiness

The npower website is the equivalent of a digital Swiss Army knife: as useful as it is versatile.

The Britain-based energy company serves about three million residential and business customer accounts with electricity and gas. While its web presence provides a convenient 24/7 platform for customers to contact and interact with the company – without having to pick up the phone – it also facilitates myriad transactional demands such as entering meter readings and paying bills. It also provides ecommerce functions such as buying products, reviewing and changing tariffs, and more.

“We’re always looking to drive customer contact and engagement through npower.com,” said Jon Drinkwater, Digital and Data Director at npower. “Both the website and app provide an always-on presence for customers. As we evolve

our frontline services to become even more responsive, we realise we would not have been able to achieve that promise anywhere at scale without having both the platform as well as technical flexibility offered by Sungard AS.”

As a result, Drinkwater and his team must assure a constant state of readiness for their site, continually being able to satisfy their customers’ needs. According to an audit prepared by a third-party group on behalf of npower, approximately 60% of customers engage initially with npower over its website while about 85% of all transactions come through its web presence.

“Customers are not only able to self-serve basic transactions, but also review and change tariffs, move their account when they move homes, manage payments, arrange smart meter installs, interact with consumption tools, facilitate messaging and much more. The level of fully automated functionality has evolved significantly over the last few years,” added Drinkwater.



## THE SOLUTION

### Supporting three pillars

In 2017, following the time when Innogy npower’s infrastructure was hosted (or colocated) in one of its own data centres, Sungard AS proposed moving the npower infrastructure onto its Managed Cloud platform. This satisfied npower’s desire to move away from a CapEx model to more of an OpEx one.

Three pillars support this partnership: availability, resiliency, and security.

For availability, Sungard AS’ Enterprise Cloud Service (ECS) delivers an enterprise class, multi-tenancy scalable IT infrastructure that provides a platform to deliver IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service). Customers need only buy committed resource pools (compute, memory and storage) for today’s requirements. Extra resource or burst capacity can be provisioned to a live environment, and any changes made to that environment are automatically replicated to the secondary site/data centre. In the event of a disaster, the live services can be activated within the secondary data centre, providing customers with a resilient solution without having to purchase additional hardware.

“What makes Sungard AS stand out from other providers is its level of response. In the instance of a major incident, a bridge call with the respective teams happens very quickly and includes the engineers investigating it,” said Ian Jordan, Digital Operations Manager. “This is incredibly useful and gives us a view into how the investigation is progressing. It also allows us to speak directly to the engineers rather than having to go through an intermediary. This helps to resolve issues much faster.”

Resiliency is also integral to availability. Having a full replica of the environment within a second data centre means any changes made within the production environment are automatically replicated to the second data centre. Should a disaster disable the primary environment, Sungard AS can activate all services quickly and easily, recovering environments with only seconds of data loss.

Achieving that level of business continuity and disaster recovery is especially meaningful for npower and its customers. “Getting people heat and power is a basic need. To that end, we need to ensure all of our services, including our

website, are as resilient as they are commercially viable,” said Drinkwater.

A third pillar, security, is likewise indispensable to npower operations. In addition to providing services such as IDS (Intrusion Detection System), log harvesting, DDoS (Distributed Denial-of-Service) monitoring and OS security, Sungard AS also provides npower with a monthly security report which highlights vulnerabilities such as security incidents that were raised during the month. The report, in conjunction with a monthly security meeting, allows Sungard AS to advise npower on any recommendations to consider.

“Sungard AS takes the security of our environment very seriously. We know the importance of protecting our infrastructure and customer data, as well as the impact a security break would have on our business,” said Jordan.

“Our monthly meetings are invaluable to review the security of our environment while having an analyst onsite to explain, in layman’s terms, the security events reported. This gives us the confidence that our environment is in safe hands.”

Additionally, Sungard AS solutions also support npower’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. This includes being able to provide evidence of what npower was doing with customer data, how it was protecting it, and who has access to it.

“The Sungard AS security design and the service they provide has helped us meet our GDPR requirements and given us the confidence our digital infrastructure and customer data is protected to a very high standard,” said Jordan.



## THE RESULTS

### **A competitive model that demands uptime**

“The UK energy market is highly competitive, with digital services an important hygiene factor as well as a critical point of differentiation. The arrival of smart meters and subsequent new online tools and capabilities adds to an already high transaction environment across sales and service activity,” said Drinkwater.

He added, “Like any retailer today we rely on seamless availability, and our website needs to be up 24/7/365.” The implications of an unavailable website are profound.

“If we ended up with the digital channel being down for any significant period of time, the contact centres would be overwhelmed,” said Kiel Wright, npower’s IT Service and Commercial Director. “Above and beyond the obvious commercial impacts of downtime, it flies in the face of first and foremost always being there for customers.”

Maintaining that level of uptime goes hand in hand with finding a vendor dedicated to doing just that, time and again. “To maintain site response time, we depend on Sungard AS to review and increase our capacity as needed.”

### **The customer imperative**

For Drinkwater, Jordan and others on npower’s digital team, everything they do begins and ends with the customer journey.

“We try to view everything from the customer’s perspective, putting their needs first,” said Drinkwater. “Our interactions with customers have resulted in direct improvements to our digital services. For example, the type of tools and data they want alongside interfaces that facilitate easy transactions. By partnering with Sungard AS, we have never been constrained to satisfy customers’ expectations when they come to our website.”

At the heart of that journey is npower’s relationship with Sungard AS.

Wright concluded, “My mandate is simple: to work with partners that make things happen. To step up to challenges we’ve identified in the business and not have to spend weeks or months going through a lot of red tape to address things that are impacting customers right now,” he said. “Ultimately, we wouldn’t be able to do any of that without the frontline support of Sungard AS in the provisioning of our website.”

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