

## **Brixton PLC**

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Brixton plc prepared for 'business as usual' should a network disaster strike

## Brixton PLC

Brixton plc is the leading specialist owner of industrial and warehouse property in the UK. It owns and/or manages more than 19 million sq ft of space located predominantly in the South East of England and primarily around Heathrow and West London. It operates through two main subsidiary companies: Brixton Investments, which is responsible for acquisitions, disposals and development; and B-Serv, its customer service-focused asset management subsidiary.

## The Challenge

In a post 9/11 operating environment with significant management resource and supporting data located in central London, Brixton recognised that it needed a fast, reliable and secure disaster recovery (DR) solution that would not only restore its data but its entire business systems. This would replace the time consuming, complicated and sometimes unreliable process of backing-up to tape, with the intention of slashing the potential two week recovery window to have the business up and running again in the event of a network outage.

IT Director, Paul Lawson, has led a major rationalisation of Brixton's technology infrastructure, and any DR solution needs to be compatible with this. Specifically, the server estate has been virtualised and reduced from 30 servers to just four physical hosts, in addition a new SAN infrastructure has been installed. The DR solution must complement the new virtual network, so avoiding the need to replicate like-for-like hardware.

Brixton required impartial advice and validation of the solutions under consideration. Ultimately, Brixton required a cost effective, flexible, fast and low maintenance appliance based solution to run outside of the virtualised server network. More importantly it needed to successfully evaluate potential solutions through simulating a network disaster to test capability in an environment similar to their own.

*"With the help of Kelway's expertise and impartial advice we are now assured of fast recovery in close to an hour, leveraging an encapsulated solution that is both easy to manage and tailored to our specific and changing needs."*

**Paul Lawson, IT Director - Brixton plc**

# The Solution

Whilst the two businesses had not previously worked together, Paul Lawson had personal experience of Kelway and so invited its assistance in the selection of a DR solution. Holding the highest accreditations across a number of vendors and technologies, Kelway was able to offer both impartial advice and the opportunity for Brixton to quickly see a demonstration of suitable solutions in its Proof of Concept Laboratory.

Brixton required an easy to maintain solution that might efficiently replicate both critical and non-critical data on an 'as needs' basis, with amendments to any back-up schedule being both fast and simple to exercise. It also required straight forward 'push button' functionality, whereby the in-house IT team, without the need for external support, could switch multiple workloads using a single appliance and then power-on recovery with one click.

Kelway's accredited consultant technicians in the fields of storage and virtual communications were provided with an overview of Brixton's network infrastructure. A number of project solutions were considered, and it was agreed the PlateSpin Forge solution would be tested and validated in a network disaster simulation that mirrored Brixton's data environment.

Successful in demo, PlateSpin Forge is an encapsulated solution that protects both the physical and virtual server workloads, and uses embedded virtualisation technology. In the event of a production server outage, workloads are rapidly turned on again in the recovery environment and will continue to run as normal until the original is restored.

Brixton procured two PlateSpin Forge boxes, each with 2.7 terabytes of onboard storage available. Now located at one of its industrial estates at Heathrow, West London, and implemented with the assistance of PlateSpin technicians, involving replicating all network data, the solution went fully live within six weeks of Brixton taking delivery.

Currently, around 30 per cent of space is utilised on one Forge appliance and approximately 40 per cent on the second. Data is replicated on a regular basis, across all 20 servers. There is an overnight schedule for non-critical data, whilst back-up is every hour for critical data. As back-up only takes changes to disk, replication is considered to be 'data light' and takes just a couple of minutes for each server with an average of 400 Mb packages transmitted during replication.

# The Results

Workload protection and recovery is at the heart of PlateSpin Forge's functionality, and with minimum draw on Brixton's technical resources on a day-to-day basis it is a cost effective solution. Back-up across the virtualised server network takes about 15 minutes whilst the various routines can be altered with both ease and immediate effect, offering a high level of management control. In the event of a network outage, the entire server farm can be restored within an hour.

Paul Lawson, IT Director, Brixton plc, said, "Kelway was the catalyst in helping us to select the DR solution that best fits our new virtualised network, which represented a considerable investment in itself. With the help of Kelway's expertise and impartial advice through setting out the various options open to

us, we were able to validate the PlateSpin Forge solution and test its capabilities in an off-site demo suite. Successfully installed, we are now assured of fast recovery in close to an hour, leveraging an encapsulated solution that is both easy to manage and tailored to our specific and changing needs."

Brendan Clifford, Business Manager at Kelway, said "Kelway has provided Brixton with the impartial advice it required, and the ability to organise a physical demo of the preferred DR solution at short notice so as to fast validate its capability and suitability, through the simulation of a real life network outage. In so doing, we have assisted in the identification of the strongest solution for Brixton's technology environment, matching both budget and expectation."

London City Office  
St Mary's Court  
20 St Mary at Hill  
London, UK, EC3R 8EE  
t +44(0)20 7375 3757  
f +44(0)20 7375 1525  
e info@kelway.co.uk

London Docklands Office  
Building 1000  
Dockside Road  
London, UK, E16 2QU  
t +44(0)20 7055 6055  
f +44(0)20 7055 6200  
e info@kelway.co.uk

Basingstoke Office  
Vertex, Chineham Court  
Lutyens Close, Basingstoke  
Hampshire, UK, RG24 8AG  
t +44(0)1256 697222  
f +44(0)1256 697100  
e info@kelway.co.uk

United Arab Emirates Office  
Business Central Towers  
11th Floor, Suite 1106B  
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai  
PO Box 500833, UAE  
t +971 4 801 9279  
e info@kelway.co.uk



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