Relocation of SSE Group's Datacenter

Stredoslovenská energetika, a. s., including its affiliated and subsidiary companies SSE-Distribúcia, a. s., SSE-Metrológia, s. r. o, ElektroEnergetické Montáže, a. s. (hereinafter "SSE"), is a group of companies dealing in electrical power distribution and related supporting services. The group operates in the Žilina, Banská Bystrica and Trenčín regions, where it delivers electricity to some 690,000 customers. It provides its customers with comprehensive services connected with power transmission and delivery. The SSE group has been operating for 85 years in the Slovak marketplace. The company contributes to the further economic development of the region by building new connections and through investment and support of society-wide interests.

Benefits:

- increased resilience to outages (geocluster established)
- reduction of complexity and energy demand via IT consolidation.

Solution

SSE operated several remote IT operations in Žilina and the surrounding area. In the past, the company was unable to further expand its IT due to a lack of space in the datacenter located in the company's administrative offices (DC1). It was not possible to increase the computing power more with respect to the growing needs of the company's business, and so the application of standards (security and best practices) was being hindered. The relocation of key parts of DC1 into a newly built technology centre cured these problems. Today, SSE additionally operates a call centre at the new technology centre and also plans to operate a central dispatching office for management of its electricity supply systems. Tempest, in collaboration with an IBM team, carried out the relocation of the key portion of the DC1 infrastructure while in production. The relocation included an IT consolidation, which improved utilisation, reduced system complexity and optimised space and energy usage.

The Assignment

Tempest's task was to safely relocate key equipment necessary for SSE information operations without interrupting the provision of IT services. The requirement was a very rapid, efficient migration with emphasis on risk minimisation. Alongside IBM technology, which made up nearly 65% of the deployment, equipment from Brocade, Cisco, HP and Sun Microsystems was also moved. The object of the move carried out by Tempest was that the IBM equipment needed to run all of SSE's critical applications, which included, for example, SAP, ECM for document management and a customer information system. Tempest provided for the relocation of an IBM DS8300 disk array, IBM system p595 servers, an IBM Total Storage tape system and supporting equipment for the disk array and p595 servers. The relocation also included SAN infrastructure comprised of SAN switches and ADVA devices.

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The Prerequisites for a Successful Move

In order to successfully handle the datacenter relocation, Tempest worked up general and technical requirements and secured the cooperation of all teams. *„Before preparing the project plan itself, we also designated competencies and responsibilities for crisis situations, decided on a fallback method and defined requirements for the status of the IT environment just before the migration relative to ongoing projects,"* explained Peter Červenák, Tempest project manager. *„In terms of technical requirements, we designated specific requirements for the location's preparedness. The number of configured service Ethernet networks, number of telephone lines, requirements for VPN connectivity, and so on,"* he said. From the perspective of coordination, essenital specifications from the customer were designated as continuous power, metering protocols for new routes, providing for entry to the affected areas and people with necessary technical skills on the systems being migrated.

The Relocation

„The DC1 relocation ran in three key phases: the move of the IT operation to the DC2 computing centre, the relocation of DC1 systems to the newly-built technology centre and the cutover of those systems into geocluster operations," stated Peter Pongrác, Key Account Manager for Tempest. Precision testing of individual system disconnection was conducted prior to moving the computing capacity, such that there were no interruptions to application continuity. Next, all necessary activities were performed for the safe and reliable relocation of datacenter equipment to its new location. During the migration, all of SSE's critical systems were running at the DC2 computing centre.

„The relocation project plan consisted of several key phases, where we strictly tracked adherence to time windows necessary for the individual operations," explained Milan Valjašek, SSE's main coordinator for the project. *„During the preparation phase as well as during the relocation itself, we ran into the many traps which such a demanding project entails. Fortunately, SSE's experienced team along with experienced contractors were able to jointly overcome all of these snares effectively,"* he said. After the migration, all systems were started up in a controlled process without time constraints. Computing capacity was equally divided between the new technology centre (TC DC1) and the computing centre (DC2).

The Consolidated Technology Centre – Recap

The datacenter relocation was carried out by Tempest in collaboration with IBM in October 2009. In a very short time, the project met all of the set goals and specified precision project management and qualified specialists on both sides. The DC1 relocation project provided SSE with the ability to increase and adapt its computing performance to the needs of the business, greater resilience against outages and reduced IT complexity and energy demands. The project – in which more than 30 professionals from both sides participated – was ranked by the customer as one of its most successful. The relocation took 10 days, and together with preparation and testing ran for nearly two months. Thorough preparation and testing by SSE and Tempest enabled the datacenter relocation to be executed within the planned timeframe and without major problems that could have threatened SSE's IT operations. The management and collaboration of the teams on both sides were of a high standard, which contributed to completing the relocation and switching of the new datacenter to live operation wihin the established timeframe.

„I am pleased that we met the customer's requirements within the established timeframe and scope, and did so even in the face of unforeseeable circumstances. The people on the customer's side deserve credit for that, as do the Tempest/IBM team. I would particularly like to mention the main project coordinator, Milan Valjašek, and the head of the infrastructure department, Michal Čarný"

said Peter Pongrác, Tempest Key Account Manager, in assessing the project

„We've been working with Tempest for five years now. We have become convinced during this time that they are a partner with quality know-how and a fine ability to communicate. The datacenter relocation project was our most important IT project in 2009. Its objective was to improve dramatically the level of security, reliability and availability of IT resources within our company. The fact that the datacenter relocation became part of our most successful project of the year, is proof of the fact that we made the right choice,"

said Vladimír Valach, director of the Finance and Services division, briefly appraising the project.

Facts in Brief:

- the DC1 relocation project met all of the customer's expectations in the set timeframe
- the relocation did not interrupt the operation of critical applications
- the relocation concerned the customer's infrastructure for all its critical applications
- not counting the preparation phase, the move project itself took 10 days
- a team of more than 30 professionals from the SSE Group, Tempest, IBM and other contractors all took part

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