

Case Study

/ ASOS.com



/the challenge

ASOS operates purely online and consequently server uptime is of premium importance. Previously, ASOS hosted its own servers in their office which meant upgrades were both slow and expensive. As a growing business, this was a big problem for ASOS, and it was imperative that they could react quickly to market changes and grow as needed without being restricted by large overheads or slow implementation processes.

As a purely online retailer, keeping the servers safe and operational was also of vital importance. However, the London office lacked the necessary fire prevention, UPS and security that the business needed after six years of steady growth. This, along with the cost and speed concerns, prompted a move towards an outsourced solution.

Many of the hosting and co-location providers that ASOS initially considered were based inside the M25 circle, which was unacceptable. London can be difficult to access during peak hours, and in the event of a major terrorist attack, the M25 has been designated a potential lockdown zone for London, so ASOS was also concerned about the safety of their data in the aftermath of the 7th July attacks.

"Our previous solution wasn't flexible or cost-effective enough," said Paul Cottingham, Infrastructure Manager, ASOS. "Not only was it expensive to upgrade, but we couldn't provide a completely secure environment for our servers in-house. Being a purely online retailer, this contributed to more than a few sleepless nights."

//at a glance

Company

– ASOS.com

Industry

– On-line retailer

Viatel Solution

– Co-location plus 1 Gigabit Internet connectivity

Key Benefits

- Bandwidth upgrades take days rather than months
- Full power plus power protection with UPS and diesel generator
- Fire protection and climate control
- Physical security

"It would have been disastrous if our servers had been stored in the Hemel Warehouse. Many businesses went under following the Buncefield disaster, but thanks to Viatel's solution, we weathered the storm."

Paul Cottingham, IT Director



/the solution

ASOS investigated a number of providers, before opting for Viatel's co-location service. This allows the company to store its server in Viatel's secure datacentre in Egham, with complete backup in an additional datacentre in Bracknell. Viatel's facilities are environmentally controlled with fire suppression systems, UPS and 24-hour security and access for authorised staff.

Viatel's datacentres are, crucially, outside London, so that the servers are beyond the security lockdown zone, and easily accessible even in the event of a disaster. ASOS's IT staff can access the facilities at any time of day or night and are able to fully manage the services themselves. This arrangement allows ASOS to carefully control how much it spends on managed IT services – by keeping external intervention to a minimum, it can save money but still ensure that the servers are safe.

Based in Surrey, Viatel's Egham premises are close enough to ASOS to allow a fast access. It was imperative that any changes to IT infrastructure or server storage could be executed quickly and avoid too much downtime.

/the result

ASOS now has its servers stored in a secure premises with UPS, fire protection and climate control. It is far easier to upgrade server bandwidth, as ASOS can simply call Viatel and arrange it within a few days, rather than a few months. If there are any problems, the ASOS team are sent an email immediately so that problems can be remedied.

Having a co-located solution gave the company an upgraded and improved infrastructure, which is more flexible and can better accommodate the needs of a growing business. ASOS is currently considering moving from its London office, and having the majority of the IT infrastructure off-site will make the move far easier and result in less downtime.

During the explosions at the Buncefield oil depot, the ASOS warehouse in Hemel Hempstead received significant structural and water damage. It was several days before staff were allowed back on-site, and £3.8m of stock was pronounced unsellable. Fortunately, as the IT was all stored off-site in one location, the customer database remained intact. ASOS was therefore able to stay in touch with its customers, and notify them of estimated delivery dates or cancellations.

"It was unfortunate that the explosion occurred during our busiest time, in the run-up to Christmas," continued Cottingham. "It was several days before the police let anyone back on-site and we could assess the levels of damage.

"Fortunately, as our IT was intact at another location, we could let customers know when they were likely to receive their goods, and allow them to cancel. Although we chose to close the website for a while when we weren't sure how bad the stock damage would be, the systems were safe.

"It would have been disastrous if our servers had been stored in the Hemel warehouse. As it was, we lost £3.8m of stock, which was thankfully covered by the insurance – had we lost our servers, the cost would have been far, far

greater. Many businesses went under following the Buncefield disaster, but thanks to Viatel's solution we weathered the storm."

/about us

Viatel provides business communications services to companies of all sizes across Europe. We think differently at Viatel. Viatel provides companies of all sizes across Europe with high quality, competitively priced communications services. We think differently at Viatel. We listen to our customers, make a point of understanding their needs, and deliver a service that is right for them, not most convenient for us. We have been in this market since 1991 and we are here to stay.

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