

2007 Examination Case Study Barclays IT Services

IT services at Barclay's bank supports a nationwide network of branches and offices containing over 80,000 screens. Barclays is one of the largest financial services groups in the United Kingdom. It has nearly 75,000 staff split into seven major business groupings in over 60 countries.

IT services have focused on service delivery and improvement. In September 2005, a new Chief Information Officer was appointed. Also, a chief operations manager has been appointed. Her role has centred on the 'Getting IT Right programme' and providing leadership in strategy, vendor management, governance, quality assurance and reporting. Additionally, the recently appointed IT director for UK banking has been concentrating on a substantial renewal programme. IT was reorganised to use single suppliers for application development and communication. A seven year agreement was signed with BT to provide voice, LAN, WAN and firewalls. A business process outsourcing deal was agreed with Siemens, and application development was outsourced with Accenture in a 6 year £400 million contract.

A transformation of the IT department involved increasingly centralising the IT function. This required a shift away from a federated IT business model in which, for example, asset tracking was a combination of a localised responsibility and a central responsibility. The strategic priorities of this transformation were culture, service stability, infrastructure renewal and seamless project engagement. Service execution needed to be flawless. The value of IT services needed to be demonstrated in the context of providing world-class capability. There would be a commitment to align business requirements with IT. An overall philosophy was declared:

To align IT services with the current and future needs of the business and its customers;

To improve the quality of the IT services delivered;

To reduce the long-term cost of service provision.

An early project involved examining software licence compliance with IBM. This involved examining software on ten mainframes, 13,000 servers and 80,000 workstations. Previously software asset tracking had not been addressed; asset tracking has concentrated on hardware inventory management for the 50% of the bank's IT infrastructure that IT services was responsible for.

Barclays Operational Control Centre

The Barclays Operational Control Centre manages the mainframe and midrange operations. These involve the execution of the batch jobs that update accounts and record transactions. This is a sizable operation, involving 42 million batch jobs per year, 18 million UK customer accounts updated every night, 2.2 million international accounts, three million cheques per day and £1 billion BACS transmissions per day. The mainframe operation at BOCC involves managing over 7000 scheduled and emergency changes per year.

The BOCC is split into three groupings covering mainframes, midrange/ Tandem and service recovery management. The BOCC is sited at Knutsford, with an alternate

operational control centre at Altringham. The Altringham centre is run as a hot site. Every fifth week, staff move from Knutsford to Altringham and run operations from there. The data centre is in Gloucester, with a back-up disaster recovery centre in Greenford.

The helpdesk at BOCC supports the batch operations and principally acts as a technical helpdesk. The customers of the helpdesk are primarily IT staff throughout Barclays. Business groups such as the branch network have their own helpdesks. Technical requests from these helpdesk are fed through to the BOCC helpdesk. BOCC rarely refer to end-users unless clarification about a problem they are dealing with is needed. The helpdesk activities are recorded using the Peregrine Helpdesk Management System which is standard throughout Barclays. Control of quality involves technical surveys of IT staff and the use of 'scorecards' which record, among other data, the number of jobs completed.

Incident Management Improvement Project

A majority of incidents at BOCC relate to failures in batch jobs. It is generally considered easier to deal with batch job failures than, for example, workstation failures, since data on the failure is provided by software called Command Post which provides alerts. These alerts provide structured data about the failure and provide information for creating an incident record. This information includes job codes which identify the originating application.

However, the handling of batch incidents was getting out of control. Often incidents were raised automatically by the executing job itself and provided insufficient detail to follow up. It was difficult to identify the severity and criticality of an incident and hence direct staff resources to the most critical business processes. Hence an incident management improvement project was carried out.

The goals of this project were:

- To ensure the best use of resources to support the business;
- To develop and maintain meaningful records relating to incidents;
- To devise and apply a consistent approach to all incidents reported.

An ITIL toolset was used which focussed on incident management, problem management, change management and availability management.

Some of the problems identified were:

- A lot of messages from incidents referred to the same type of problem, Overruns of jobs were not being reported correctly such that job schedules were frequently changes and jobs started late.
- This had an effect on the service levels and the schedules that service performance managers were working to.
- There were no auditable procedures for updating operations processes.