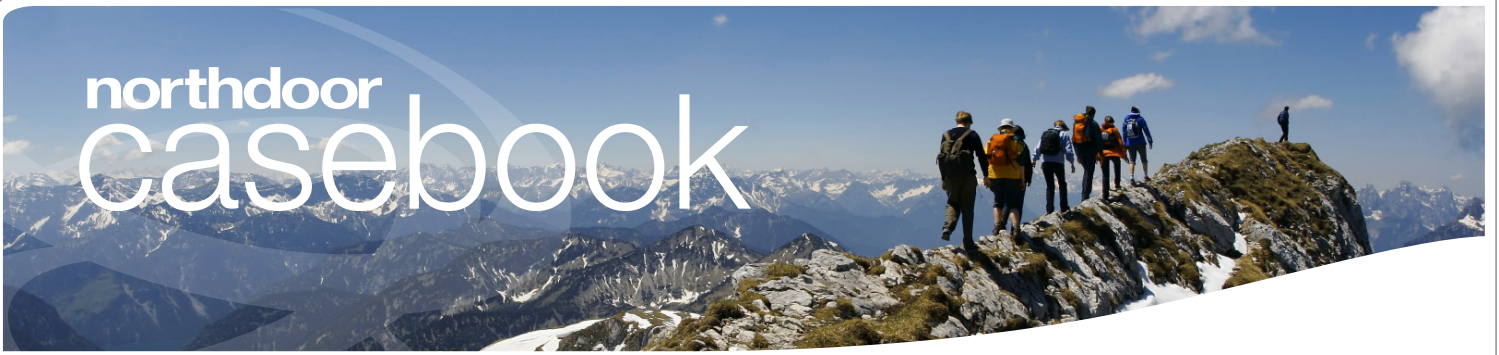


northdoor casebook



ABN AMRO reinvigorates IT infrastructure for growth

ABN AMRO Clearing engaged Northdoor to prepare for significant growth in transactional volumes by refreshing its financial transaction processing systems, an initiative which included a major international systems migration. Northdoor deployed a twin-site solution built around IBM Power 770 servers and DS8800 storage, offering much faster transaction processing and enhanced disaster-recovery capabilities.

About ABN AMRO Clearing

ABN AMRO Clearing is a leading global securities services provider clearing more than 16 million trades a day across 85 financial exchanges worldwide. The company offers an integrated, modular package of direct market access, clearing and custody services, catering not only for traditional financial products such as stocks, bonds, futures and options, but also for energy, commodities, carbon allowances and more. It ranks among the top three clearers in every global time zone.

The Business Challenge

Facing rapid growth in transactional volumes, the European arm of ABN AMRO Clearing, which has employees in the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany, had made a strategic decision to consolidate its core transaction processing systems from multiple locations across Europe to its two UK data centres.

To address projected growth in its business, and ensure sufficient scalability to tackle future challenges, the company needed to refresh its IBM Power Systems landscape. One of the cornerstones of ABN AMRO Clearing's IT strategy is always to have headroom to deal with double the previous peak in business activity.

Technologies

- o IBM Power 770
- o IBM System Storage DS8800
- o IBM i operating system
- o IBM PowerHA, FlashCopy and Global Mirror.

Powerful enterprise infrastructure

Northdoor's solution:

- o Helped ensure a smooth, low-risk international systems migration
- o Provides greater performance and headroom for growth
- o Accelerates and simplifies disaster recovery procedures, providing greater assurance around business continuity.





Pieter van Tol, Chief Technology Officer Europe, explains: “The existing servers in the UK did not have the capacity to host our main platform, especially given the projected growth in transactional volumes. Many of our clients are algorithmic / high frequency traders, and the total volume of trades our clients produce has been more than doubling each year for many years. Within the expected life of the new servers we were projecting this growth to continue.”

By consolidating multiple critical systems to its UK data centres, ABN AMRO Clearing was also effectively concentrating its risk, thereby increasing the requirement for high availability and disaster recovery (DR). The existing DR arrangements would not remain effective for the years to come.

The Northdoor Solution

Working with Northdoor, ABN AMRO Clearing deployed two IBM Power 770 servers with IBM POWER7 processors, one in each of its Greater London data centres. Each is linked to an IBM System Storage DS8800 array, and all data is mirrored using IBM Global Mirror software.

Three transaction-processing applications run in IBM PowerHA clusters on the Power 770 servers, with two production environments on one server and one production environment on the other. Each server contains backup partitions ready to take over the workload of the production environment on the other server, so that ABN AMRO Clearing can fail over to either data centre in the event of a disaster.

IBM FlashCopy is used to take point-in-time backups of the systems on each side. IBM and Northdoor used the IBM Lab Services Advanced Copy Services Toolkit to create a simple menu/command structure that enables the automation of the FlashCopy and role-swap processes, meeting ABN AMRO Clearing's exacting service requirements.

“Northdoor already knew our environment well, and they have a good understanding of our business and strategic priorities, so they were the logical choice of partner for this major international migration project.”

Pieter van Tol, Chief Technology Officer Europe, ABN AMRO Clearing London



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Pieter van Tol, Chief Technology Officer Europe, ABN AMRO Clearing London

“Northdoor already knew our environment well, and they have a good understanding of our business and strategic priorities, so they were the logical choice of partner for this major international migration project,” comments Pieter van Tol. “The migration ran smoothly over the course of a single weekend, thanks to the careful preparatory work we conducted with IBM and Northdoor.”

With the new infrastructure in place, ABN AMRO Clearing can swap roles on the servers—that is, make the backup server into the production server—within just 20 minutes, including validation checks.

“The disaster recovery process is now largely automated, and much faster and more reliable than before,” says Pieter van Tol. “In particular, we have full confidence that all of the data is being replicated accurately between our two sites.”

The Benefits – faster, resilient and more scalable

The move from POWER6 to POWER7 technology has delivered significant performance improvements and provided plenty of headroom for ABN AMRO Clearing to meet the projected growth in transactional volumes.

“We’ve seen the time taken for some processes cut in half, and we no longer have to wait 30 minutes or more for backups to complete,” says Pieter van Tol. “Before we moved to the Power 770s, we could see that our overnight batch runs were in danger of encroaching on the working day as we ramped up the total volume of transactions. The new infrastructure has eliminated that risk.”

The new servers contain additional processors and memory that can be activated on demand, so that ABN AMRO Clearing can seamlessly handle spikes in activity without needing to make a permanent investment in extra resources. This meets the company’s strategic objective of always being prepared for double the previous peak activity.

A scalable, robust solution

The Northdoor team delivered:

- An analysis of migration options, with recommendations for best-practice approach
- A solution that increased the performance of key transaction-processing systems
- Improved resilience and faster failover in the event of a disaster.

“Northdoor has always been able to hit the ground running on every project. To us, Northdoor is a trusted partner.”

Pieter van Tol, Chief Technology Officer Europe, ABN AMRO Clearing London



“The main pillars of our IT are robustness, flexibility, cost-efficiency and scalability,” comments Pieter van Tol. “The new infrastructure that we deployed with Northdoor’s help delivers all of those qualities. Northdoor has always been able to hit the ground running on every project. To us, Northdoor is a trusted partner.”

About Northdoor

Northdoor is an IT consultancy with a full spectrum of services. The company has more than 20 years of experience in delivering technology solutions that help enterprises to meet their business objectives. Its solutions range from application development to hardware and software provision and IT support.

Northdoor has provided IBM technology solutions to more than 250 companies across all sectors with strength in financial services and professional services. The depth and breadth of Northdoor’s technical capabilities have been acknowledged not only by its enterprise customers and in industry awards, but also by IBM through the Centre of Technical Excellence Awards. The company is also the first IBM Business Partner in the UK to achieve IBM’s Storage Specialist status.

For more information about Northdoor and its enterprise solutions based on IBM technologies, please visit www.northdoor.co.uk/ibm.

To know more and do more, contact Northdoor

Visit www.northdoor.co.uk/ibm

or phone Northdoor on

+44 (0)20 7448 8500

alternatively email us at

ibm@northdoor.co.uk

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