SharePoint migration unleashes HP productivity

Migrating one of the world's largest SharePoint deployments allows HP to enable new social tools and enterprise search capabilities

Industry
High Tech

Objective
Transition one of the world's largest SharePoint® deployments without disrupting the business

Approach
Leverage HP Technology Services' and Enterprise Services' migration methodologies

IT matters
- User survey ensured that migration plan would accommodate user needs and preferences, maximizing future adoption of the new SharePoint functionality
- Hardware assessment validated that platform would support new SharePoint version

Business matters
- Migration completed without significant business disruption or interruption of user access to SharePoint sites
- Social functionality enhances employee engagement and support improved communication and collaboration
- Enterprise search improves ability to find, share data and information

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HP is one of the top five largest SharePoint customers in the world—and HP considers the software to be one of its business-critical applications. So when it was time to upgrade to SharePoint 2013, HP leveraged methodologies developed by its Technology Services' and Enterprise Services' departments to ensure that the migration would proceed smoothly and would minimize the company's exposure to the risk of business disruption.

Starting in 2006—as part of a massive data center and application consolidation initiative—HP began replacing several one-off Microsoft® SharePoint deployments with a single, global SharePoint platform. The consolidation proved a success. It lowered the costs associated with running and maintaining HP's SharePoint instances. It allowed HP's IT organization to integrate SharePoint with other enterprise communications tools, including Microsoft Lync® and Microsoft Exchange, providing users with seamless Unified Communications and Collaboration functionality. And it spurred employee adoption of SharePoint technology: HP's SharePoint 2010 deployment is now one of the top five largest in the world. There are more than 150,000 SharePoint sites deployed within the company, representing ~90% of HP's intranet landscape.

SharePoint has also become one of HP's business critical applications. "We have businesses that couldn't make a sale or ship a product without SharePoint," notes David Brehm, director of SharePoint Engineering, End User Solutions, HP IT. "The technology is that important to HP."

The criticality and size of HP's SharePoint 2010 platform also presents HP with unique challenges, however. When Microsoft released SharePoint 2013, for example, HP was eager to embrace the new version's functionality—particularly its social and enterprise search tools—to further enhance SharePoint's value to HP employees. The challenge was to perform the switchover without risking disruption to the business.

HP met this challenge thanks to its extensive experience in large-scale application migration projects. The company leveraged migration methodologies and processes it developed within its Technology Services' and Enterprise Services' departments, which offer HP Migration Services for ECM. These best practices, based on numerous large-scale migrations of previous SharePoint version upgrades, helped ensure the new migration would proceed smoothly and without negative impact on HP's SharePoint users.

Building corporate bridges

HP employees leverage SharePoint in a number of ways across the organization. Users set up SharePoint sites to organize and publish information relevant to projects, initiatives, or themes; these sites then act as repositories for documents, forums, and contact information. Many HP teams also rely on SharePoint's workflow functionality to track project activities and automate approval processes.

"We're a big company and our people are spread out over the globe," says Larry Hackney, Sr., service manager, HP IT. "We're separated by space and time. SharePoint helps us connect, find each other, and share information. It reduces the friction that can impede the exchange of knowledge across our enterprise."

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The functionality Microsoft added to SharePoint 2013 further enhances the technology's value to HP. "SharePoint 2013 took a big step forward in terms of social capabilities," Hackney notes. "It adds the ability to tag, share, like, and follow content. Features like news feeds give users new ways to engage with fellow employees.

"Our internal research shows that when we give our employees social tools, they feel more engaged," Hackney adds. "On average, they score 10% higher on our employee engagement scale. SharePoint's new social capabilities are a strategic fit for us."

Another key enhancement to SharePoint 2013 is improved search functionality. "With the new version, users can perform enterprise-wide searches of both sites and people," Hackney explains. "Employees looking for information or contacts no longer have to first find relevant SharePoint sites."

Both of these enhancements represent functionality that HP asked Microsoft to add to SharePoint. "Microsoft is one of our corporate alliance partners," Hackney explains, "and HP is also one of the biggest SharePoint customers. So when Microsoft began planning SharePoint 2013, we worked with them to articulate what features would be of the most value to us.

"When Microsoft released the new version," Hackney continues, "we were extremely impressed. We began to make plans immediately to deploy it."

Successful migration. World-class productivity.

Leveraging HP Technology Services and Enterprise Services

The approach HP IT took to the SharePoint 2013 migration was based on methodologies HP uses when it performs migrations of enterprise software platforms for its corporate customers. "This is our third major SharePoint upgrade," Hackney says. "The guidance HP Technology Services and HP Enterprise Services provided on the previous two upgrades was instrumental in helping us devise a migration strategy for the 2013 migration."

The HP IT migration team first surveyed users to identify opportunities to refine settings and policies around its SharePoint services. It also worked with site administrators to manage outdated content. If sites appeared to be inactive, for example, the team worked with the site administrators to determine whether site content, or even the entire site, could be deleted. This helped reduce the scope of the migration and largely simplified the SharePoint environment. "We generally reduce the size of our SharePoint environment by about 10% during migrations by deleting outdated content," Hackney says.

The team also performed an assessment of the existing SharePoint hardware platform. For several years now, HP's SharePoint environment has run on HP ProLiant BL460c and ProLiant BL465c Server Blades, with 754 TB of storage space allocated across a mix of HP XP P9500 and HP XP20000/XP24000 Disk Arrays. The environment also leverages a number of HP Software solutions. HP SiteScope supports applications monitoring, for example. HP Universal CMDB enables HP IT to store, control, and manage software and infrastructure components. HP Service Manager generates service tickets in the event of system issues. HP IT uses HP Server Automation to automate processes like the deployment of server patches, and HP Data Protector to perform backup and recovery.

After assessing the environment, HP IT determined that it supports the performance and capacity requirements of the new SharePoint edition.

Once the team completed the assessment, it developed a migration plan. "We decided to take a database-level approach, instead of migrating groups of sites," Hackney says. Through this approach, the team would migrate a cluster of several thousand sites once per week, and then spend the next seven days responding to any issues that arose. "Rather than migrating sites continually, which would tie up our resources on the transition alone, we allocated time to support site administrators and end-users," Hackney explains.

The team also retained its existing policy of using SharePoint's out-of-the-box capabilities. "We try to avoid customizing the software, to minimize our support costs and help ensure future upgrades are simpler to perform," Hackney notes.

Customer at a glance

Hardware
• HP ProLiant BL460c G7 and Gen8 Server Blades
• HP ProLiant BL465c Server Blades
• HP XP P9500 and HP XP20000/XP24000 Disk Arrays

Software
• Microsoft SharePoint 2013
• Microsoft Lync
• Microsoft Exchange
• HP SiteScope
• HP Universal CMDB
• HP Service Manager
• HP Server Automation
• HP Data Protector

HP services
• Enterprise Services
• Technology Services
  – HP Migration Services for ECM
  – HP Education Services

To prepare users for the new SharePoint 2013 functionality, HP IT used HP Education Services for developing the training materials. It also partnered with Microsoft to hold educational webinars, which it recorded and posted so that employees who could not participate in real time could view them later. Other materials, such as FAQs and migration checklists, are also available for users and SharePoint site administrators.

> "By further enhancing collaboration and the exchange of knowledge, SharePoint 2013 unleashes the productivity of HP employees."
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> – David Brehm, director of SharePoint Engineering, End User Solutions, HP IT

Finally, before starting the migration, the team performed a pilot switchover within its own HP IT organization. This allowed HP IT to test the migration processes and validate that user sites would perform as expected after they were moved to the new SharePoint version.

Once the pilot was successfully completed, new SharePoint sites were provisioned onto SharePoint 2013, and HP is continuing the migration from 2010 into the 2013 environment. To date, the enterprise migration also proved a success, without any significant disruption to business processes or user access to SharePoint sites.

Better employee engagement, world-class productivity

As a large, global company, HP relies on technology to ensure that its employees—over 330,000 in all, plus around 80,000 vendor partners and contractors—can find each other, communicate with each other, share information, and collaborate on projects.

SharePoint has therefore become one of HP's business critical applications—and thanks to the successful SharePoint 2013 upgrade, the technology now delivers even more business value.

"By upgrading to SharePoint 2013, HP is fostering a more engaged and connected workforce," Hackney concludes. "It's easier for our people to know what they need to know, when they need to know it. And that helps HP drive world class productivity across our global organization."