

# case study



## Direct Wines

### *Raises a toast to Eurodata*

#### Background

Direct Wines is a 37 year old privately owned company and the world's largest home delivery wine merchant with a turnover of £240 million. It runs some well-known wine clubs including "The Sunday Times Wine Club" and "Laithwaites". The processes and IT infrastructure underpinning all of these brands are shared. IT plays a key role in ensuring that Direct Wines remains extremely responsive to its customers and that deliveries are made on time. Over the last 8 years, Direct Wines has grown from a single site in Theale, Berkshire, with around 300 users, to a multi-site company with over 800 users. The head offices are still in Theale and include a call centre as well as a distribution centre with 50 computer users. There is a dedicated call centre in Plymouth, Devon, which supports up to 300 users and a distribution centre in West Hallam, Derbyshire, with a large number of staff of which around 30 are computer users. Direct Wines (Laithwaites) also has seven shops with a new outlet in Virginia Water, which opened in October 2006.

#### The Challenge

In IT as in viticulture, growth is a good thing and an indication of health, but it needs to be tended to and managed if it is to be sustainable. In early 2006 there were three key challenges facing Direct Wines' Computer Services Manager, Alan Morton:

- Rapid growth: Direct Wines' 3-5 year plan in 2006/7 included

increased call centre capacity and a dedicated distribution centre in Gloucestershire by January 2007. Its fulfilment centre is a 24/7 operation, and the call centre is also open seven days per week.

The scale of the Direct Wines' operation and the rate of its growth required a reliable, resilient IT system that could keep pace.

- Customised desktops: the desktop environment within the organisation was predominantly Windows NT 4.0. Application installations were largely manual and no packaging expertise in Microsoft Software Installer (MSI) format existed in-house. Direct Wines wanted the benefit of such features as ease of administration and deployment.

- Users were utilising an operating system that was no longer supported by Microsoft, did not allow for enhanced security at the desktop and was incapable of running specific business critical applications.

Morton said: "We wanted to find a supplier that we could fully trust to handle our key systems. We selected three recognised systems integrators and invited them to a competitive pitch for the deployment of a Windows XP based solution.

"In the end it was Eurodata that we chose to work with. Eurodata differentiated itself through its proposed deployment strategy – they had put a lot of thought and effort into developing a robust migration process. In terms of cost they were also extremely competitive.

The fact that they had experience executing similar projects for other companies of our scale also reassured us that we were choosing the right partner."

#### The Solution

Before any actual work was carried out, Eurodata arranged a series of workshops and created a test lab environment, which allowed Direct Wines to identify any 'issues' that might arise during the implementation.

The desktop image creation and deployment solution was based on Microsoft SMS 2003. Eurodata was briefed to retain as much functionality from the old desktops as possible. This meant that the transition for the users wasn't too dramatic and they felt more comfortable with the changeover.

*"If we were to execute another large IT project we would like to think that we'd be capable of doing most of the work in-house, however we would certainly talk to Eurodata, using them as a sounding board and advisor due to the depth of experience they've amassed."*

*Alan Morton  
Computer Services Manager  
Direct Wines*

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The ability to retain a user's desktop personality was very important – local documents, i.e. favourites, networked printers etc. needed to be copied from the desktop during the migration process and automatically restored after the image and business critical applications had been deployed to the desktop.

A single image was created to cover all of Direct Wines' desktop estate. The image deployment process was developed so that any new PC models that might be used within the organisation in the future would be able to utilise the same desktop image.

## The Benefits

Using a combination of zero or 'lite touch' image and application deployment methods with tighter security and more powerful support processes, Eurodata has provided Direct Wines with a user desktop and server environment that offers the following:

- 'Future-proofing' of hardware and operating systems.
- Reduced desktop support costs
- Stable and supportable user and application environment
- Organisation wide standardised desktop image.
- Desktop configuration and application installations based on business units.
- Increased security: Microsoft XP provides increased security with the release of Service Pack 2 and the firewall component associated with it.
- Ease of use: both Windows XP and Microsoft Office 2003 provide greater ease of use compared to previous versions of the products.

- A systems management platform: in the future Direct Wines will be able to utilise SMS 2003 to manage its desktop and server resources.

- Enhanced functionality (InfoPath, multimedia etc) and performance (Windows XP is faster and more efficient than previous desktop operating systems).
- Compatibility with up to date technology (wireless, USB and similar).

Apart from the benefits that the solution itself has brought, Eurodata has helped to grow the knowledge base of Direct Wines' IT team.

Morton explains: "Skills transference was an important part of the project. Eurodata made a great effort to educate my team throughout each stage of the implementation. We hope that this will make us more autonomous in the future and allow us to do our own updates and refreshes. A real high point was the deployment of almost 300 workstations in Plymouth in less than four days. This was a massive achievement and well exceeded the expected deployment of 50 workstations per night."

## Project Integrator

Established in 1990, Eurodata is a privately owned independent specialist IT company dedicated to providing solutions to the mid market. Employing around 120 people across 4 locations (three in London and one in Wales), Eurodata cost-effectively plans, executes and delivers high-quality services across four key areas; Managed Services, Professional Services, Distribution Services and TeamEuro. Partnering with such organisations as Microsoft, HP, Whale and IBM we are able to provide customers the ability to easily take advantage of today's latest technologies which in the past have only been available to large organisations. Our honest and open approach allows us to effectively provide flexible, scalable solutions. Eurodata's area of excellence focuses on the desktop, server and network space covering storage and archiving, network and endpoint security.

### Solution Key Components:

- Windows XP SP2 WIM image to support all identified hardware
- Deployment mechanism to allow for zero or light touch remote deployment of Microsoft Windows XP SP2 incorporating client customisations
- 20 identified core business applications packaged using MSI Technology
- Office 2003 and Group Policy Object (GPO) Active Directory security templates
- GPO analysis and configuration addressed
- SMS 2003/Remote Installation Service (RIS)/OSD technologies used to deploy the solution
- Microsoft user state migration tool to copy and restore identified user state during the migration process
- Microsoft Solutions Framework as process methodology

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