covenco
DATA MANAGEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE 365

CASE STUDY

IBM Systems Monitoring & Support for a Global FMCG Giant.

Delivering peak efficiency for a complex IBM Power Systems environment.

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Customer:
A global manufacturing and retail FMCG brand.

Industries:
Retail, Printing and Manufacturing of creative tools and products, real-estate and media-streaming services.

Operations:
International presence across 100+ countries. IT operations with a central data centre based in the UK and regional business centres around the world.

Needs:
Proactive maintenance, rapid incident response, and expert guidance on system optimisation. Plus, IBM server and storage monitoring with precise and transparent reporting.

Solution:
Comprehensive Managed Services for IBM Power and Storage to address the customer's specific requirements with remote monitoring, proactive maintenance, and professional IBM technical support services.

Gold
Business
Partner

IBM

Covenco enjoys a productive partnership with a global FMC brand in the northeast of the United Kingdom. Our IBM Managed Services team provide comprehensive IBM Power & Storage hardware, software, and systems support to their complex IT environments.

This established relationship affords Covenco an intimate understanding of the customer's IT systems and architecture, positioning them ideally to address the customer's evolving infrastructure needs. Building upon this foundation of trust and collaboration, Covenco has been selected to provide a comprehensive remote monitoring and support managed service for this customer's extensive IBM power and storage estate.

This case study details the challenges, solutions, and positive outcomes of this collaboration, demonstrating how Covenco's expertise ensures the smooth and efficient operations of the customers' critical IT infrastructure.

The Challenge:

This customer relies heavily on their IBM infrastructure to support core business activities, from order processing and distribution to customer relationship management and financial reporting. The infrastructure comprises a substantial array of IBM Power Systems with attached FlashSystem storage solutions, networking components and tape libraries.

Maintaining such a complex environment's performance, stability, and security presents significant challenges.

The customer needs a partner capable of providing expert-managed monitoring and engineering support to always ensure business continuity and operational efficiency.

The need for proactive maintenance, rapid incident response, and expert guidance on system optimisation is paramount. Furthermore, when the customer set out to source an appropriate Managed Service provider to monitor their IBM server and storage estate, they identified the need for a solution that could integrate seamlessly with existing IT processes - while providing precise and transparent reporting.
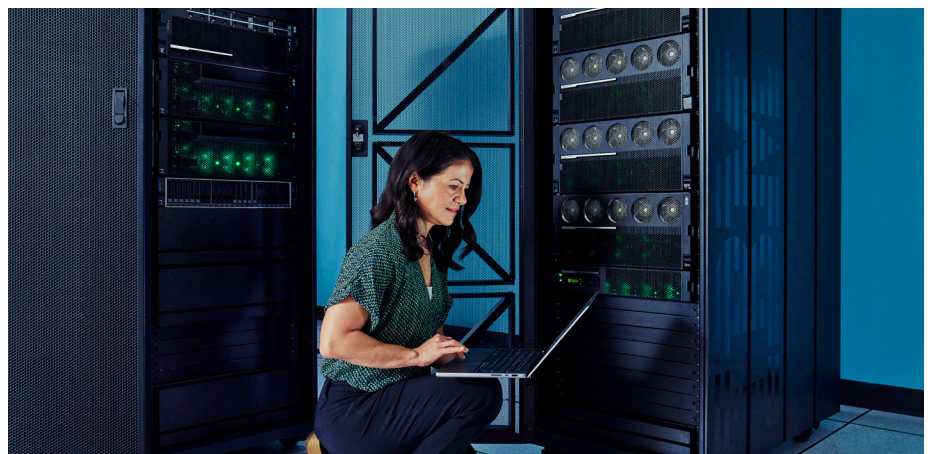
The Solution:

Covenco's Comprehensive Managed Services solution for IBM Power and Storage addresses the customer's specific requirements through a tailored blend of remote monitoring, proactive maintenance, and expert support services.

The solution's core lies within Covenco's proactive approach, using sophisticated industry-standard software tools such as IBM Storage Insights to monitor the IBM environment 24/7. This constant vigilance allows Covenco to identify and address potential issues before they impact normal operations. Covenco's responsibilities, which were outlined in the customer's RFP, encompass a wide range of critical services, including:

> **Management and administration of a large IBM Power System estate serving international users:**
> Covenco assumes responsibility for managing and administering all of the customer's IBM Power Systems, including vital tasks such as backups and recovery, disaster recovery solutions, PTF (Program Temporary Fix) management, HMC management, and second and third-line support for operating system-generated issues. This comprehensive approach ensures the ongoing health and stability of the customer's international server systems.

> **Provision of project technical resources:**
> Covenco provides a nominated system-aware team for project implementation, facilitating change requests and coordinating with project managers and team members. This ensures that IT projects are executed efficiently and effectively, minimising disruption to the customer's business operations.

> **Incident resolution and technical documentation:**
> In the event of an incident, Covenco's team provides rapid and effective resolution, minimising downtime and ensuring business continuity. Furthermore, the Covenco team continuously maintains comprehensive technical and procedural documentation, ensuring the customer can access all necessary information.

Advanced Monitoring for Proactive Problem Prevention

In this instance, Covenco offered two distinct options for remote monitoring, NYCO and Halcyon, allowing them to choose the solution that best suited their needs and budget. Both options provide comprehensive monitoring and alerting capabilities, identifying and addressing potential issues promptly.

Ultimately, the customer chose the NYCO solution which came with a 12-month rental license for the IBM Power servers and NYCO Messenger across all storage partitions to monitor and alert on system and batch job failures.

Additional features include ASP (Auxiliary Storage Pool) monitoring and Job queue monitoring for alerts on active jobs, allowing the Covenco monitoring team to address any potential bottlenecks or issues pro-actively. NEMS400, deployed across both physical systems, focuses on hardware failure messages, transmitting them to a central location for analysis and action by Covenco's engineers.

The monitoring solution is configured to alert the Covenco help desk dashboard and the customer's internal support dashboard in response to defined trigger events. This dual notification ensures that both teams are immediately aware of any potential issues, facilitating rapid response and collaboration.

Proactive Maintenance:

Covenco's service includes proactive maintenance activities, such as applying PTFs and system patches. Covenco meticulously calculates the time required for these tasks, factoring in the specific equipment list and the need for out-of-hours maintenance for all systems. This proactive approach ensures that the customer's systems are always up to date with the latest fixes and security patches, minimising the risk of vulnerabilities and performance issues.

Comprehensive Support Services

Covenco's support services complement the customer's hardware and software maintenance contracts. While Covenco's support focuses on proactive monitoring, incident response, and system administration, hardware issues are escalated to a specialist maintainer. This approach covers all aspects of the customer's IT infrastructure. The service is based on a regular schedule; however, for critical system issues, escalation is available through Covenco's helpdesk 24/7.

"Maintaining such a complex environment's performance, stability, and security presents significant challenges."

Optional managed IBM engineering and consulting solutions from Covenco

Covenco recognises the value of an on-site presence and can offer customers the option of having an engineer attend their data centre on an agreed-upon schedule.

Covenco's engineers all hold expert-level IBM accreditations for both IBM Power and IBM Storage systems. They can attend change control meetings at customer premises and provide additional on-site support as needed. This hybrid approach perfectly balances remote efficiency and hands-on expertise for customers with more demanding environments.

Additionally, Covenco can offer customers IBM Power System Design and Consultancy services to give guidance on efficient IBM Power System architecture.

Our consultants work closely with customer subsidiaries, vendors, and suppliers to develop innovative and effective solutions. This consultative approach ensures that a customer's IT infrastructure remains aligned with their evolving business needs.

Service Summary and Commercial Considerations

Covenco provides this customer with a comprehensive annual support and monitoring solution, including the NYCO remote monitoring software, together with a 12-month support and system check service.

The Outcome:
A Partnership for IT Excellence

Covenco's 24/7 monitoring and rapid incident response minimise downtime and ensure business continuity. The ongoing maintenance activities reduce the risk of system failures and security vulnerabilities. At the same time, Covenco's expert guidance helps this customer optimise its IT environment to support their evolving business needs.

This customer can now focus on its core business activities, confident that their IT systems are in capable hands.

The transparent reporting and communication provided by Covenco fosters a strong collaborative relationship, allowing the customer to make informed decisions about future IT strategies.

"This customer has gained access to a team of expert IBM professionals, advanced monitoring tools, and proactive IT management, significantly improving the critical IBM infrastructure's stability, performance, and security."

Quantifiable benefits and return on investment

While the partnership's primary focus is ensuring the smooth operation of the customer's critical systems, collaborating with Covenco also delivers tangible business benefits. The proactive monitoring and maintenance reduce the number of incidents and the associated downtime, leading to increased productivity and cost savings.

Covenco helps customers avoid costly disruptions to their business operations by preventing potential issues before they escalate.

Furthermore, Covenco's expertise in IBM Power Systems enables customers to optimise their IT infrastructure, improving performance and efficiency - translating into faster processing times, improved application responsiveness, and reduced IT operating costs.

Service Levels and Incident Management

Covenco implements a clear and transparent incident management process with four levels of severity, prioritising critical issues and enabling the team to respond effectively while adhering to agreed SLA's.

> **Severe (Crit-Sit)**
> Systems down, business non-operational.
> Typically a 2-hour response.

> **Severity 2**
> Some services interrupted; business operational.
> Typically a 4-hour response.

> **Severity 3**
> Systems operational, such as an error message requiring a response.
> Typically a next business day response.

> **Severity 4**
> Non-critical question, such as a new user creation.
> Typically a next business day response.

A Long-Term Strategic Partnership

The success of the partnership also represents a long-term strategic alliance built on trust, mutual understanding, and a shared commitment to excellence. Covenco's proactive approach, combined with its deep understanding of the customers' business needs, positions Covenco as a trusted advisor who helps navigate the complexities of its IBM infrastructure.

The two-year service agreement extension underscores the customer's confidence in Covenco's ability to deliver consistent, high-quality services. This long-term commitment allows both organisations to plan strategically, ensuring that the customer's IT infrastructure remains aligned with their long-term business goals. It also fosters a deeper understanding of the customer's environment within Covenco, leading to even more effective and tailored support.

This strategic partnership goes beyond day-to-day maintenance. Covenco actively participates in strategic planning to improve the long-term direction and viability of the customer's IBM platform. This includes collaborative efforts focused on enterprise-wide resource allocation, ensuring that the Power and Storage environments are fully utilised to the maximum benefit of the organisation.

By aligning IT strategies with the customer's overall business objectives, Covenco contributes to the long-term adaptability and sustainability of their IT infrastructure. This involves forecasting future needs, advising on technology road-maps, and ensuring the platform can scale and evolve with the business.

Furthermore, Covenco provides tactical advice and implementation for individual projects, driving specific improvements and developments within the customer's IT environment. This includes initiatives focused on enhancing High Availability and System Security.

Covenco services encompass the implementation of new standards for data security, pro-actively protecting the organisation's data from current and emerging threats. This dedication to security ensures that the customer's sensitive information remains protected, building resilience against cyber threats and maintaining compliance with evolving regulatory requirements.

Key Success Factors

Several key factors contribute to the success of this partnership:

› **Deep IBM Expertise:**
Covenco's team of certified IBM experts possesses a deep understanding of the technologies and best practices required to manage and maintain complex IBM environments. This expertise is instrumental in ensuring the smooth operation of the customer's systems.

› **Proactive Approach:**
Covenco's proactive monitoring and maintenance allow customers to avoid potential issues before they impact their business operations - a key factor in minimising downtime and ensuring business continuity.

› **Tailored Solutions:**
Covenco's ability to tailor its solutions to the customer's needs is essential to the partnership's success. Covenco can provide the most effective and cost-efficient solutions by understanding the customer's unique requirements.

› **Strong Communication and Collaboration:**
Open and transparent communication is at the heart of the relationship between the customer and Covenco. It facilitates effective collaboration and ensures that both teams align on goals and priorities.

› **Commitment to Service Excellence:**
Covenco's unwavering commitment to service excellence is a key driver of the partnership's success. Our focus on delivering high-quality support and exceeding expectations earns us the trust and confidence of the customer.

Conclusion:

A Model for IBM Managed Services.

This alliance demonstrates the value of a strategic partnership approach to managed IT services.

By focusing on proactive monitoring, expert support, and a deep understanding of their client's business needs, Covenco helps this customer improve their critical IBM infrastructure's stability, performance, and security.

> "Covenco provides expert guidance and hands-on support for these critical projects by working closely with the customer's IT team - ensuring successful project implementation and measurable results."

This partnership is a model for other organisations leveraging managed services to optimise their IT operations and drive business value. The customer's long-term commitment underscores the success of the relationship and their confidence in Covenco's ability to continue delivering exceptional service.

Systems and environments are becoming increasingly complex and demanding for IT teams, and partnerships like this are essential for businesses to thrive and achieve their strategic objectives.

Organisations like this can free up valuable resources and focus on what they do best: serving clients and growing their business by focusing on core competencies and entrusting IT operations to expert partners.

Contact the Covenco IBM Team for detailed information on our Managed Services for IBM Systems & Storage:

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