



# Sky doubles testing capacity to boost product innovation

HPE Performance Center improves testing environment throughput by 150 per cent

## Objective

Create a centralised testing environment, available at multiple sites allowing greater collaboration and a better way of working across the business

## Approach

Formed a business plan based on enterprise options with HPE, supplier of incumbent LoadRunner software

## IT Matters

- Standardised processes and centralised resources, enabling greater collaboration among testing team, reducing duplication and replicating best practise
- Increased testing capacity, allowing the business to more than double its testing workload while only adding 20 per cent more manpower
- Enabled testing to be scheduled out of hours, raising performance testing throughput by 150 per cent

## Business Matters

- Enabled rapid development of new products and services, securely and effectively, maintaining business reputation for innovation
- Centralised licence models, improving delivery times and increasing value to the business



Sky is the pioneer of satellite TV in the UK. It is a now 'triple-play' operator across TV, telephone and broadband with 10.5m customers. It continues to forge a reputation for innovation, being the first to market with new services. It is using HPE Performance Center to transform its testing capabilities, creating an environment for more accurate, faster testing – allowing faster times to market for new products.

## Challenge

### Introducing tablets to the workplace

Sky is a satellite broadcaster based in the UK. It has 10.5 million customers and reported revenues of £6.5 billion for 2011.

The business has grown from a pioneer of satellite TV into a 'triple play' operator. It currently has 4m broadband and 3m SkyTalk telephone customers; it is looking to push an increasing amount of content through mobile phones, laptops and tablets. It has a reputation for leading the market in innovation, being the first to launch remote record (Sky+), driving the viewing standard to HD and content-via-mobile devices (Sky Go).

“This is as difficult a performance testing environment as I’ve seen. You’re working on new ideas on a large scale to a fast pace, yet the tools keep pace. We have access to information we’d never previously considered. Performance testing has gone from nice-to-have to essential. We rely on tools from Hewlett Packard Enterprise to succeed.”

— Billy Hamilton, test team manager, Sky

“Sky is at the forefront of every new innovation that has gone mainstream in this market,” says Billy Hamilton, test team manager, Sky. This requires constant investment in research and development, with a pipeline of new technology and testing taking place. It also requires the ability to move very quickly with a robust and scalable product.

“We are a media company, not a financial institution. That means we commit to a date and build the product to meet that date,” says Hamilton. “We are aggressively pushed to deliver.”

#### **Needing a multi site solution**

Sky used HPE LoadRunner software for its testing, “the shining star of the performance testing world”, according to Hamilton, but the company continued to face several challenges. It lacked a centralised view of testing, running multiple testing sites was creating inefficiencies across the business and roles were replicated. Teams were unable to collaborate effectively and there was duplication of effort. Worse, software licences were kept on dongles, with staff forced to travel between locations to carry out testing. “It was farcical. We had guys flying around the country with a dongle, booking into hotels for the night. You can’t do that with 20 projects a month on the go.”

## **Solution**

### **Greater flexibility, easier collaboration**

Aware that HPE Performance Center was the best multi site version of HPE LoadRunner, Hamilton invited Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) to build a business case: “We wanted to map what benefits it would create, how much bang we got for our buck.”

HPE Performance Center would create an enterprise-based solution, with shared testing tools accessed via the web, available 24 x 7 from any location. “The technical side worked, it was reliable with a great support service and HPE was demonstrating innovation around the tools. There were no other options as strong as HPE,” says Hamilton.

The initial installation would be followed by adding HPE Diagnostics software tools and HPE TransactionVision to increase the penetration testing capability, moving from pure identification of performance issues to root cause analysis. HPE SiteScope, the monitoring tool for testing and tracking response times and availability of software applications, would also be implemented.



### Reliability, scalability

Hamilton's team conducted 170 projects in 2011, all using HPE Performance Center. These included a new digital telephony system, voice recognition software and the high-profile launch of the Sky Go application, from the merger of Sky Player and Sky Mobile TV. Most ambitiously, the company replaced its entire revenue system with a £12m investment in a new data centre, including hardware, application stack and operating system. "This is a £6.5 billion a year operation, around £3-4m of revenue every hour, you have to be fairly sure the new system is going to work," says Hamilton. "There is no roll-back to take 10.5m customers back if things go wrong."

Using the HPE TransactionVision application, Hamilton was able to identify where issues occurred and narrow them down more efficiently. Testing identified a variety of problems with the revenue system migration, including middleware, scalability issues and problems with the database layering. All were dealt with. The launch went without a hitch and to a lower cost than companies of a comparable size.

"We did this in six months," says Hamilton, "which is not a lot of time compared to other companies. A bank might have taken 18 months. We can't take that time; we need to do it, even if that means there are greater risks involved."

### Benefits

#### Faster, more efficient testing

Since the HPE deployment, the number of projects has more than doubled, but the number of testing staff has only increased by 20 per cent. This is partly because HPE Performance Center allows ongoing tests and results to be shared over the web across multiple sites. Reducing the amount of time spent waiting for tests to complete enables testers to schedule tests to run over weekends, further improving throughput.

"HPE Performance Center brings more flexibility to the way we now work by enabling us to use protocols across controllers. The ability to share testing artefacts between projects also increases efficiency and reduces costs," says Hamilton.

The financial benefits of implementing HPE Performance Center have been impressive. A Return on Investment (ROI) analysis covering an initial two year period reveals that Sky achieved seven figure savings over that period. The payback period was just 5.3 months on the initial investment.

The report also shows anticipated annual six figure 'cost avoidance' savings from sharing of information and assets, better licence management, reduced travel and courier costs and general increases in speed and efficiency. It has made the dongles redundant.

## Case study

Sky

## Industry

Communications, media  
and entertainment

## Customer at a glance

### Software

- HPE Performance Center
- HPE Diagnostics
- HPE TransactionVision
- HPE SiteScope

It has also brought Sky closer to HPE. Hamilton says the pair are testing new products together in practical situations with Sky among the first to take products fresh out of development: “It’s strengthened the working relationship.”

### From nice-to-have, to essential

The testing workload is expected to continue at the same level, including an initiative to provide Sky engineers with a mobile platform to process orders on home visits. He says HPE Performance Center enables more tests in parallel. “It’s not so much the improvements in the speed of a test – no two tests are exactly the same, so you can’t compare like for like, but we’re able to do so much more in any given day.”

This ability to do the job better has transformed the reputation of the testing department. Performance reports are available at 5am rather than late afternoon, legacy equipment is maximised and capacity planning is more accurate.

“The team has grown in influence. We’re better able to assess more technology issues relevant to the business, which means the value of the department has increased tremendously. We have more requests for our input.”

The team is also better able to inform on business risk: “Performance testing has gone from nice-to-have, to essential,” continues Hamilton.

“This is as difficult a performance testing environment as I’ve seen anywhere,” concludes Hamilton. “You’re working on new ideas on a large scale to a fast pace. Yet the tools keep pace. We have access to information we’d never previously considered, and we’re regularly taking proven test methods into new parts of the business.”

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