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# Oracle Hospitality Transformation at SSP Group



**DELIVERING FAR REACHING IMPROVEMENTS  
TO A CORE SYSTEM AT SSP GROUP**

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# CASE STUDY

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## TRANSFORMING THE PERFORMANCE OF ORACLE HOSPITALITY AT SSP GROUP

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RDB Concepts transformed the performance of a multinational company's critical business systems, bringing new speed, reliability and flexibility based on the IBM Power8 platform and proactive service management.

SSP Group plc (LSE: SSPG) operates branded catering and retail units at over 125 airports and 270 railway stations in more than 30 countries. With over 50 years' experience in the travel market, SSP Group are the food travel experts.

The company relies on the functionality provided by Oracle Hospitality, formerly MICROS Systems. MICROS had more than 35 years of experience in the hospitality sector, becoming one of the leading PoS (Point of Sale) system vendors. SSP Group

had chosen MICROS for its PoS needs because MICROS had the best coverage of the Group's global businesses. It was important to have local support and expertise wherever possible, because if a till can't function, the business can't operate. The company currently has around 4,000 PoS devices installed.

SSP Group's CIO Matthew Rea explains that today's PoS systems are about much more than simply taking payments. 'The core function of taking payments is of course absolutely vital,' he says, 'but our business has evolved to be highly tuned to what our PoS data is telling us. We run sophisticated forecasting systems which enable us to get the right supplies to the right places and, crucially, to work out our staffing needs.'



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20 PER CENT OF OUR IT SUPPORT STAFF TIME  
WAS PERMANENTLY TAKEN UP WITH... ONE  
PROBLEM AFTER ANOTHER.

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Gino D'Acampo - Euston Station the venue serves a wide selection of dishes throughout the day.

PROJECT TIMELINE	
January 2017	Sign-off equipment order
February 2017	Migration starts
September 2017	Go-live in EU region
December 2017	Pause to avoid disruption at holiday period
January 2018	Go-live in DACH region (German, Austria and Switzerland)

## A BUSINESS RUN ON DATA

To a diner at any of the outlets supported by SSP Group at railway stations and airports around the world, a great meal at a good price in convivial surroundings is an expected part of the modern travelling experience. But making that happen consistently demands a complex and responsive supply chain as well as highly flexible teams. 'Our crews have to be multi-skilled,' explains Matthew, 'and we have to deal with security clearance issues that ordinary bars and restaurants don't face, especially at airports. We absolutely rely on our forecasting systems to make sure we can staff our outlets - we don't have the option of drafting in casual help.'

So if there's any interruption in the data stream from the array of PoS terminals across its estate, or the forecasting systems have to work with incomplete data sets, the company's business suffers in a

serious way. Reliability of the systems is a business imperative. And the company was experiencing too much downtime.

'We had three major incidents within 18 months,' says Matthew. 'We had to do a huge amount of paramedic work, which wasn't our responsibility, but just had to be done. Around 20 per cent of our IT support staff time was permanently taken up with nursing the systems through one problem after another. Continual outages were impacting our business intelligence, ordering, reporting and financial processes.'

# APPROACH

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## INVESTIGATION

### 01

AUDITING THE  
EXISTING SERVICE

PERFORMANCE  
COSTS

BUSINESS BENEFITS  
ALTERNATIVES

RDB Concepts' Phill Evans picks up the story. 'Matthew asked us to audit their existing Oracle Hospitality service from a performance point of view,' he says. 'We quickly found over 20 issues that could be easily remedied. Some of these were oversights that really impacted performance, such as a failure to switch on the most beneficial features of Oracle Enterprise, which SSP were paying for.'

Other issues ranged from missing sales data to unwieldy exports, a lack of partitioning, unmonitored machines and processes, and no archiving facility.

'I admit I was a bit sceptical about whether RDB could help us,' says Matthew, 'but I'd had glowing reports

from contacts in the industry and if nothing else we'd get an objective assessment of the service we were getting. I was blown away by the results. Phill and his team simply laid out an alternative approach, including the recommended platform they'd use and the migration approach - and they'd fix the problems during the migration, so we'd have no more all-night, sticking-plaster sessions. And what we've got is a seamlessly migrated system that runs up to 40 per cent faster, rarely has any problems, and if a problem does occur then RDB fix it so it never happens again. I couldn't be any happier.'



**SOLUTION DESIGN**

02

THE RIGHT SOLUTION

INFRASTRUCTURE  
SOFTWARE  
SERVICE

With over 12 years of experience supporting MyMicros and MyInventory within Oracle, RDB Concepts were uniquely positioned to make life at SSP much easier. RDB's Will Broome, who would be closely involved with the SSP transformation, had previously been on the customer side at Pizza Hut, managing the business systems and interacting with RDB as his supplier. 'I'd worked with RDB for over six years,' says Will, 'and they were very much part of the team. We'd created a successful environment together and could use that experience to help SSP - it was a perfect match. I think SSP were reassured by that and trusted us to ask the right questions about their current service.'

RDB specified two IBM Power8 servers for installation at SSP Group premises. RDB has complete full-stack responsibility for the platforms.

The solution immediately removed 80 per cent of the risks highlighted in RDB's analysis. Workarounds and redesigned processes were then created to reduce or mitigate the remaining risks.

'We've been working closely with IBM for the past four years,' says Phill Evans. 'It's the most cost-effective platform we've found and it out-performs any Intel alternative. The number of cores you need to run Oracle is vastly lower, by a factor of five or more. In the case of the SSP Group migration of Oracle Hospitality, we went from 64 enterprise cores of Oracle RAC (Real Application Clusters) to 8 cores of IBM Power8 - and they're running at around 30 per cent utilisation. That's a massive saving in licence costs as well as an amazing improvement in performance.'

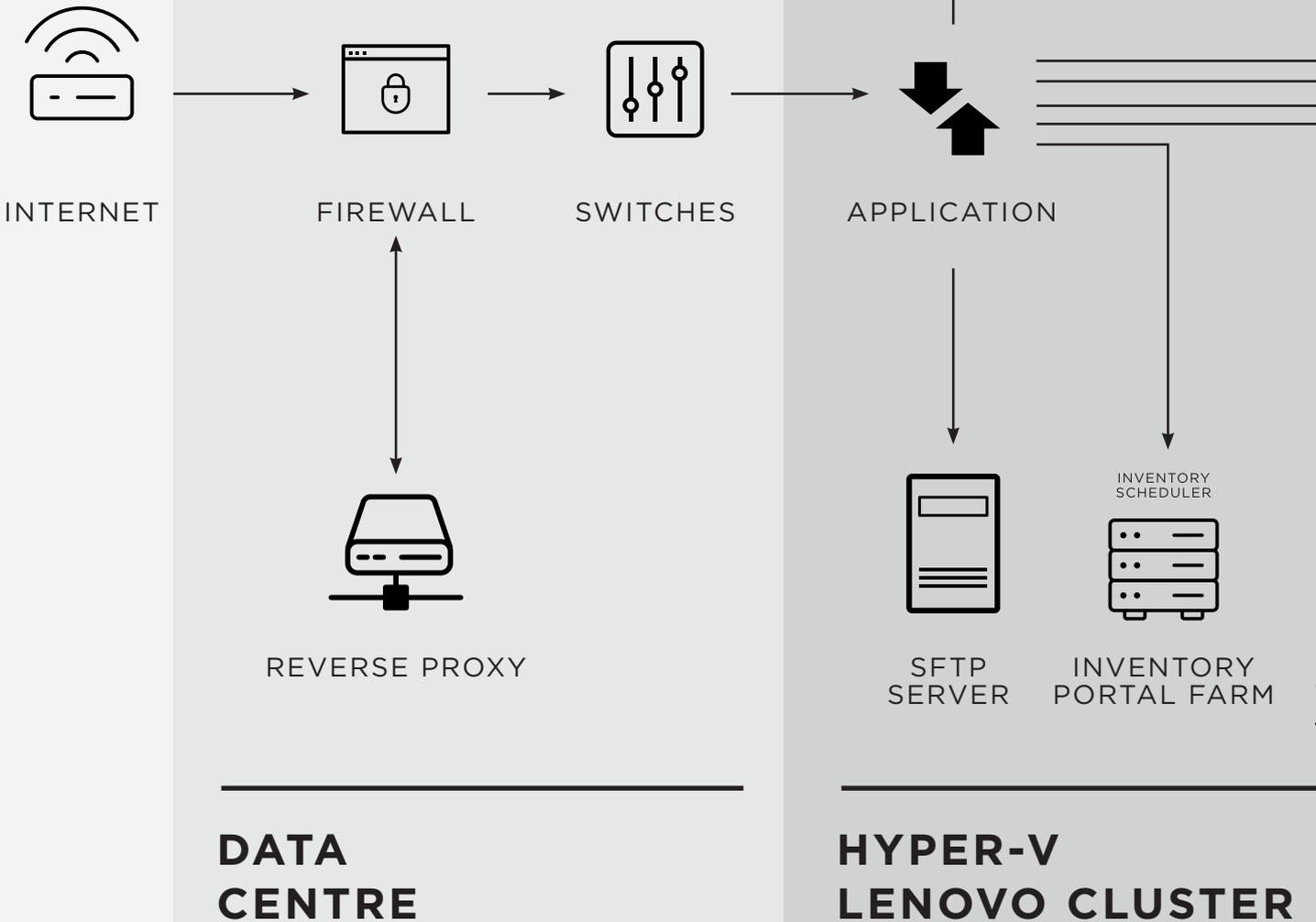
'We haven't gone above 20 per cent utilisation of the overall server capacity, which is a testament to the improvements RDB have made as well as the superb engineering of the IBM platform,' says Matthew. 'And it means we've got the capacity to migrate more of our business systems to a better performing platform that won't give us any nasty surprises or sleepless nights.'

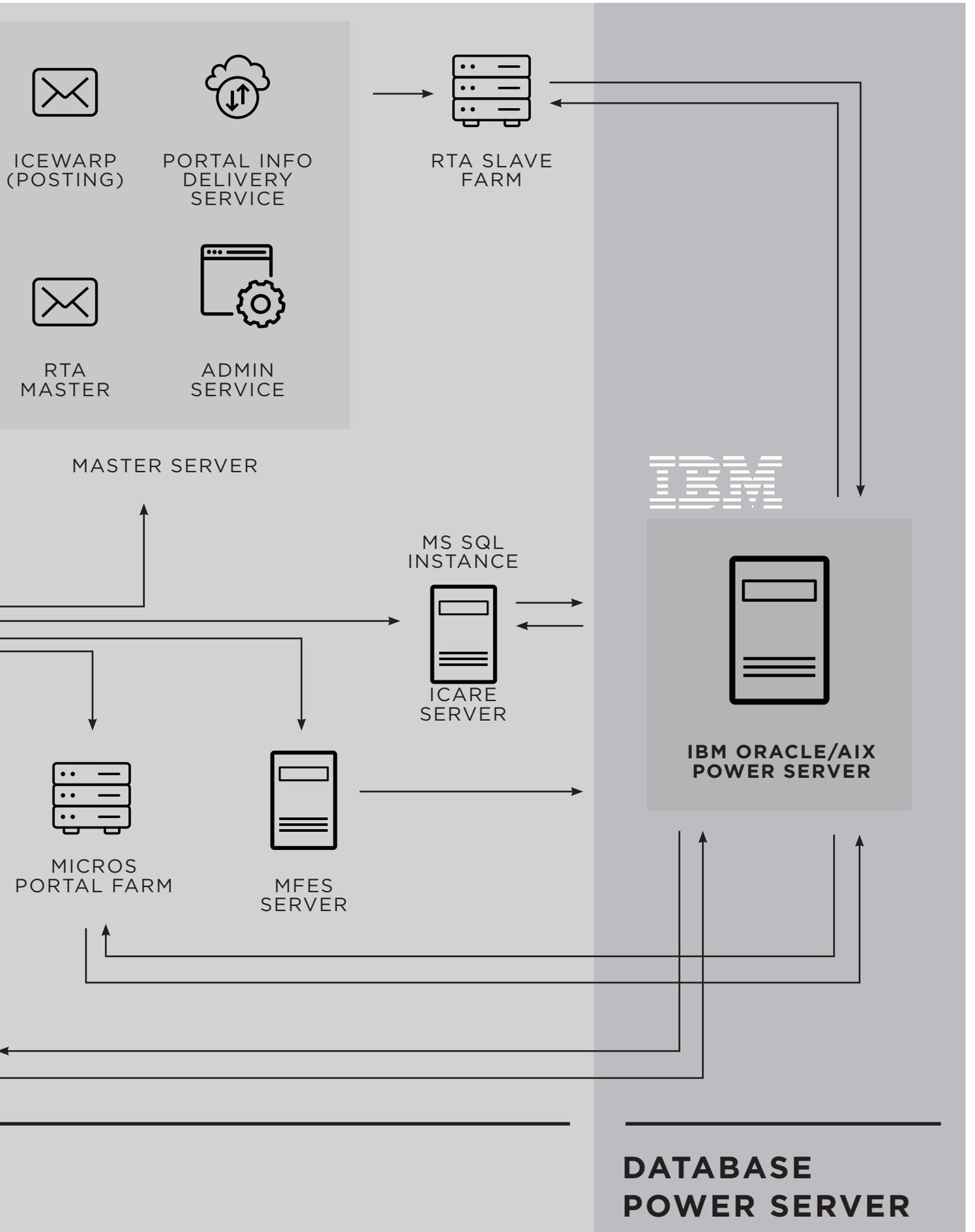
SOLUTION	
STORAGE	2 x IBM Power8 with 24 cores each, 8 cores running Oracle Standard Edition 6 x 2U Lenovo x3650 M5 model 8871 servers, each with 256GB RAM
STORAGE	2 x IBM V5000 SAN
ARCHIVING	TMaxSoft Tibero Database
SERVICE MONITORING	Custodian*24
RESPONSE	15 Minutes, Full Stack, Full Resolution
UPTIME	99.5% Guarantee

# SSP MICROS ENVIROMENT

## SINGLE SITE (EU ESTATE)

The environment consists of 2 almost identical environments. The first as seen here for EU. This second for DACH is only different in that it uses both RTA and Symphony for posting. Both sites act as Disaster Recovery (DR) for the other site.







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THEY'RE EXPERTS AND THEY CARE.  
THEY'LL NEVER LET A PROBLEM DEVELOP  
INTO A DISASTER

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## TRANSFORMATION

# 03

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
MIGRATION  
OUTCOME

RDB Concepts have developed a method of taking one month's worth of historical data and moving it into a different database. The data is then deleted from the production environment so that performance remains the same for the client. This process runs in the background so production systems are unaffected. We chose Tiberio as the archive target for this project. Tiberio gave us both partitioning and true multi-threading to make the import process as quick and efficient as possible.

The migration project finished exactly on schedule with no effect on business operations. In fact, one director asked when the migration was due to take place - four weeks after it had happened.

All SSP users have reported considerable improvements on all aspects of the portal. Some reports are running 20 times faster and all reports now complete successfully (previously some reports timed out).

RDB inform SSP of any issues before calls are received by the SSP service desk and then resolve those issues much faster than before. Learnings and alerts are implemented to avoid issues being repeated.

With the new service in place, RDB continue to

monitor the installation with its inhouse tool, Custodian\*24. Custodian\*24 is extensible so whenever the team detects a new issue they create a new plugin to prevent it from happening again. Custodian\*24 is now monitoring more than 500 touchpoints in the Oracle installation.

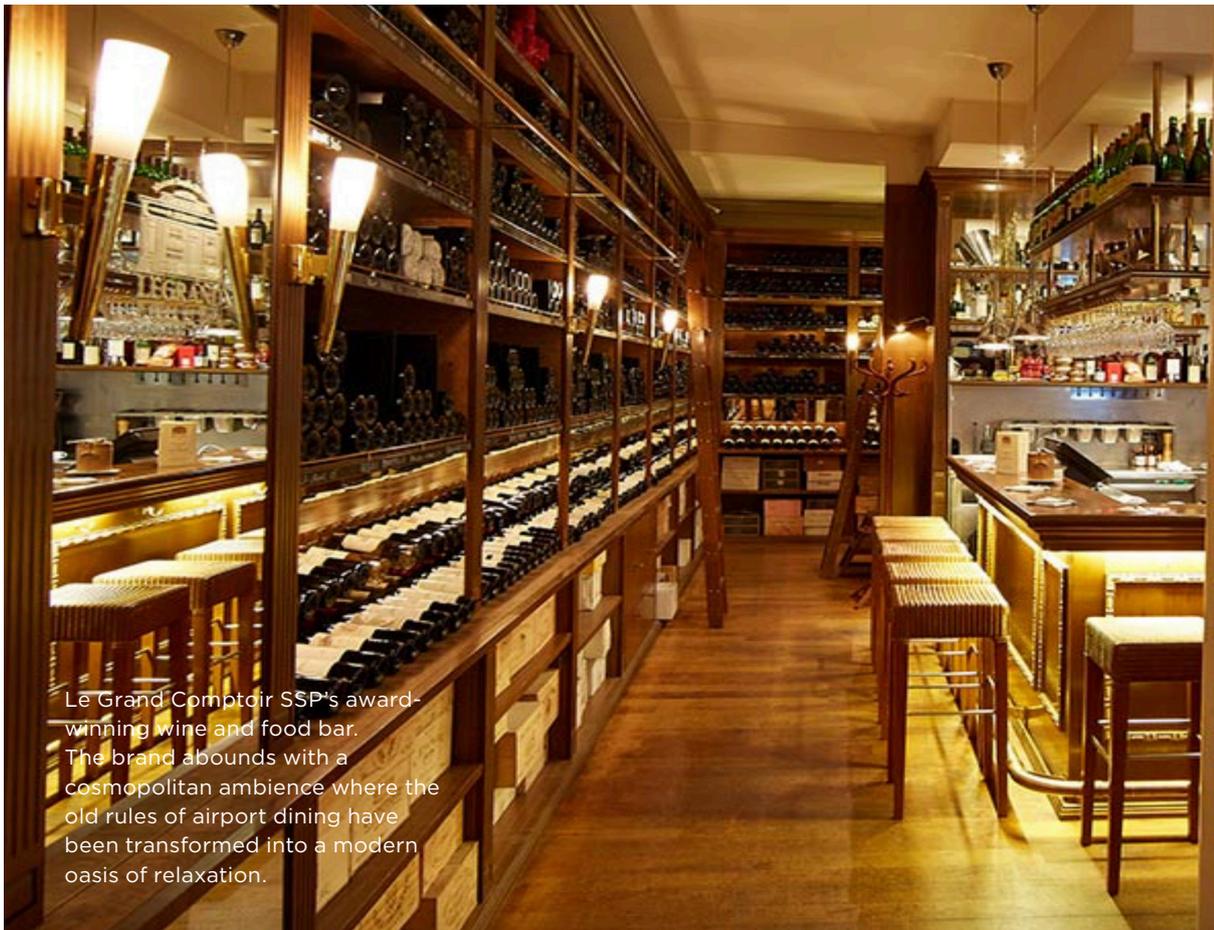
'The RDB experience has met and exceeded all our expectations,' says Matthew. 'Now we are alerted before problems occur and we are no longer constantly apologising to our business partners. For the first time in years we are focused on moving the system forward instead of constantly fire fighting. While we still have some MIs, the recovery time is an order of magnitude faster, usually there is no business impact and no MI ever happens a second time!'

### **A unique service ethos**

'If you cut Phill open, he'd bleed service,' says Matthew. 'He'd miss his own wedding to deal with a customer issue. And that attitude is natural throughout the team he's built. They're experts and they care. They'll never let a problem develop into a disaster - they'll just calmly fix it and make sure it never happens again. It's impossible to buy that in the corporate world.'



ONE DIRECTOR ASKED WHEN THE MIGRATION WAS DUE TO TAKE PLACE—FOUR WEEKS AFTER IT HAD HAPPENED



Le Grand Comptoir SSP's award-winning wine and food bar. The brand abounds with a cosmopolitan ambience where the old rules of airport dining have been transformed into a modern oasis of relaxation.

## OUTCOME

	BEFORE RDB SOLUTION	WITH RDB SOLUTION
MAJOR INCIDENTS	52	5
DOWNTIME	637.5 Hours	2 Hours
AVERAGE DOWNTIME PER INCIDENT	12.2 Hours	30 Minutes
SSP STAFF TIME PER INCIDENT	16 Hours	0
NEGATIVE BUSINESS IMPACT	Unquantifiable	0



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# ABOUT RDB CONCEPTS

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RDB Concepts is a managed service provider that specialises in running application stacks for customers with demanding SLAs who need expert services on tap. Our managed services are both proactive and fully resolving, so that you can rely on smooth running regardless of any real or virtual world issues that arise.

Our team is based completely within the UK and is recruited from the very best technicians and administrators from industry. We have excellent experience in local government, public sector, banking, investments, logistics and hospitality.

Formed in 2001, we have a continuous history, working with some of the leading technologies and with high-street names and top 500 companies. Our consulting division has decades of personal experience managing client applications and troubleshooting the complex environments clients need.

Our approach to Infrastructure and technology choices is completely agnostic, however we will always provide our complete and truthful opinion on any estate.

Our approach to service is to become as much a part of your team as possible, whether we are interacting with end-users, developers or an internal IT support team; and to achieve this we schedule regular visits on-site to make sure we are up to speed with the priorities and objectives.

The core services are split between IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service) whether on premises or in public/private clouds, PaaS (Platforms as a Service) for your software stack including application servers and databases and SaaS or Near-SaaS (Software as a Service) for core applications, whereby your users simply interact directly with the software and we take responsibility for everything.





#### SAAS AND NEAR SAAS

## SAAS

FULL APPLICATION  
MANAGEMENT

We provide complete proactive, full application stack resolution services for a host of application suites and popular platforms.

By using RDB you can forget about running the applications and get on with using them.

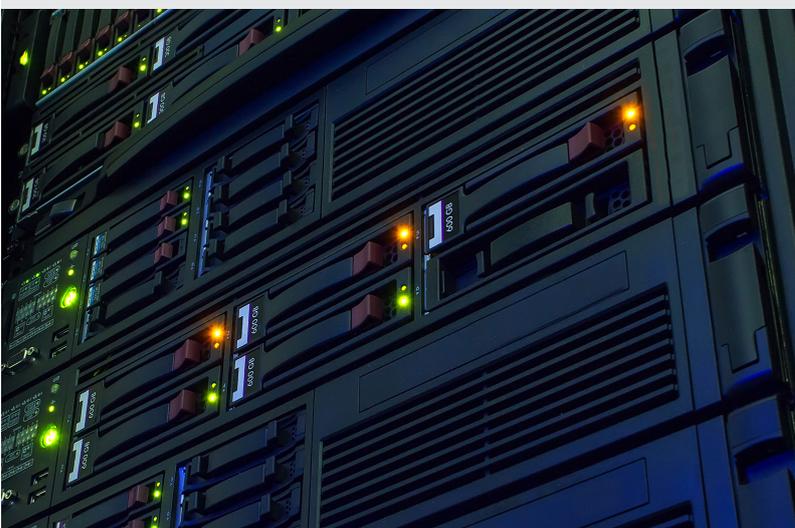


#### PLATFORMS AS A SERVICE

## PAAS

FULL STACK, FULL  
RESOLVING, PROACTIVE

Using our Custodian\*24 monitoring suite we can detect potential problems before they happen. Respond within 15 minutes and start making sure your 99.X% SLA is always within service KPIs.



#### FULL INFRASTRUCTURE

## IAAS

ON PREMISES,  
HYPERSCALERS, HYBRID

Full security compliance, direct connections to AWS, Azure and others. Full DR, Power, Intel

We can provide complete application management services for many different core applications. Leveraging our skills in the full development stack, and our state of the art monitoring solution Custodian\*24 we can provide SaaS and Near SaaS solutions to a whole host of applications.

99.X%  
SLA\*

We currently run financial systems and retail systems worldwide for top



We work to guaranteed SLAs to fit your business's KPIs. Customers can go years with no MIs. Interaction with development and application teams is scheduled so that patches and maintenance work are carried out to fit your priorities.

15 MINUTE  
RESPONSE\*

We also ensure failover procedures, security safeguards and DR are all in order. We are ISO27001 accredited



Fully resilient infrastructure with direct access to AWS, Azure and others within the same datacenter. World class security operations and accreditations. National Cyber Centre Security certified, PCI, ISO27001, ISO9001:2015.

FULL  
RESOLUTION\*

All manner of cost and performance optimisation can be achieved for the maximum in security, availability and cost efficiency.



\* ALL RDB MANAGED SERVICES ARE FULLY RESOLVING WITH 15 MINUTE RESPONSE AND 99.X% SLAS



# RDB SERVICES

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## FULL STACK, FULL RESOLVING SERVICES

RDB's main service is the complete management of entire software stacks, from complete applications to full database environments. Server clusters, IBM Power, Microsoft Servers, Solaris and all flavours of Linux. We make use of our proprietary monitoring solution Custodian\*24 to provide a proactive full stack service. Because Custodian\*24 is extensible, we can

## IAAS—PAAS—SAAS

tailor the monitoring points and transaction types to ensure the highest SLAs for clients' specific KPIs. We start work on issues within 15 minutes and don't stop until those issues are resolved.

Our technical leads visit customers' teams regularly to ensure that we can integrate and learn from clients.

## DATABASE OPTIMISATION

For 14 different SQL and NoSQL database platforms, RDB can tune your environment and make recommendations which reduce cost and also increase performance.

Many customers feel they are paying a tax to run their applications, however technological advances in processor and storage mean that many applications are over-licensed. By deploying the appropriate server technology, it can reduce license costs by as much as 80% depending on the circumstances. Frequently these savings can provide an immediate ROI for the client, and free up budget for other improvements across their estate.

## LICENCE AUDIT CONSULTING

Clients with large Oracle and SQLServer estates frequently benefit from a Performance Health Check, and Licence Audit from RDB. We can make recommendations on how to divide workloads between relational and NoSQL databases, and we can propose OpenSource solutions for staging databases and data warehouses.

Each of our recommendations is designed to provide an optimisation between performance and cost. In particular we often find a broad examination of workloads, objectives and infrastructure yields substantial savings with increases in performance. In all cases the consultancy is 100% geared to your objectives.

## SECURITY AND MIGRATIONS

Security is fundamental in the modern technology era. At RDB we don't stop security at the access level. We review not only the internal security of your databases, but also how the whole of your application stack performs. As ISO27001 accredited practitioners we also look at your whole security process and where appropriate how it interfaces with suppliers and third parties.

Migrations often form part of the outputs from our consulting work, as well as being part of the lifecycle of running your applications. At RDB we are experts in ensuring that even the most complex migration projects are executed with minimal disruption.



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