

## A FreestyleIT Case Study

# Guaranty Trust Bank (UK) Limited

**Freestyle IT builds a secure, resilient and scalable system for a new business venture**

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Peter Bown, *Executive Director, GTBank UK*

Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, founded in 1990, is a leading Nigerian financial institution with an outstanding reputation for customer focus underlined by a string of prestigious awards for excellence in customer service. In 2007 it became the first African bank to be listed on the London Stock Exchange via a Global Depository Receipt Issue and, in 2008, successfully launched its UK operations in London.

As is the case for all major financial services enterprises today, IT is at the heart of the bank's activities. To compete effectively in this demanding market and maintain its first-class reputation, its IT systems have to be flexible, completely secure and highly reliable. Also, as banking applications manage critical personal and financial information, the IT organisation must be able to ensure that no data is ever lost for any reason.

### The Challenge

When the bank decided to enter the UK market and establish a presence in London, Peter Bown, Executive Director, GTBank UK, was faced with the need to build an IT infrastructure from scratch that would meet initial requirements for banking operations and office automation, while also being able to respond to new demands as the business grew.

There is a long-standing strategy of aligning IT with the business at the bank and a high priority is assigned to leveraging technology for competitive advantage. Consequently, Peter and his IT team sought the best



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available technology for their new systems. All components had to be supplied by leading vendors with a track record of successful deployment in the banking industry.

In addition to best-of-breed equipment, the key attributes of resilience, performance and scalability depend heavily on the right system architecture. Proven processes for the operation and management of systems and data were also essential to ensure high service levels, access security and the safety of information.

"We knew that building a world-class IT infrastructure requires in-depth technical knowledge, excellent design skills and, above all, solid experience," observes Peter, "which meant that our choice of IT partner for the project would be especially crucial."

### Finding the Solution

The first step was to identify a suitably qualified IT partner for the design, delivery and implementation of the new systems. Based on past personal experience, the Head of IT at the bank recommended Freestyle IT, a well established IT solution provider with extensive experience in the financial sector and an HP Preferred Partner.

Once engaged, Freestyle IT proceeded to work with the bank's IT organisation to create a comprehensive system specification featuring high-performance, rack-optimised Proliant servers from HP and networking components from CISCO. These equipment vendors were chosen for their industry leadership and also for consistency with the proven head office systems in Nigeria.

### The Solution

While value and performance are always important, the key attributes of IT systems for banking are security and resilience to failure for any reason. To ensure the required level of security, the infrastructure design features the use of a secure network for prevention of unauthorised access and for the protection of sensitive information.

Freestyle IT built resilience into the design at multiple levels to preserve service availability and to guard against loss of data. The HP Proliant servers are arranged in resilient configurations that provide automatic failover. In addition, loss of mains power is addressed by HP Redundant Power Supplies. The servers themselves are inherently resilient and feature fault tolerant disk storage using HP's Smart Array P400 RAID disk controller, which features a battery-backed write cache for added protection.

Although the entire configuration was designed to be resilient to any single point of failure and makes use of highly reliable equipment, banking standards also demand that information be kept safe in the event of a major disaster, such as a fire, destroying the data centre. To cope with this possibility, a separately located Disaster Recovery (DR) site was specified, with data being replicated continuously to backup DR systems.

In addition to the hardware infrastructure, other key elements of the solution Freestyle IT implemented were a resilient Microsoft Windows Server based infrastructure including Active Directory, Microsoft Exchange 2007, Symantec Endpoint and Symantec Backup Exec.

"Detailed documentation prepared by Freestyle IT, covered both system design and operational procedures" reports Peter. "Its approach to system and data security met our stringent requirements."

Freestyle IT put together an experienced project team that worked closely with IT staff from the bank to implement the new systems. The bank was keen to begin trading as quickly as possible, so Peter was pleased that Freestyle IT succeeded in completing implementation on time and within budget. "Freestyle IT took full ownership of the project, from fulfilment and installation to testing and skills transfer," he comments. "The project management skills of its people proved to be as valuable as their technical ability for meeting our timescales."

### The Result

GTBank UK now has a robust, state-of-the-art IT infrastructure based on well-proven industry standard components that is readily expandable to meet future business needs. The anticipated business growth has already begun and the bank expects to more than double the number of system users in the next year.

Most crucially, the system has met the key requirements for security of access and data. "We have complete confidence in our network and data security because of the rigorous approach to requirement capture and system design taken by Freestyle IT," says Peter.

### The Future

"In Freestyle IT, we have found a technology partner that we can trust for expert advice and support, and we intend to continue to use its resources for future projects," comments Peter. "One of the next major ventures that we intend to tackle is to provide high quality internet banking services for our customers."

**"We were particularly impressed with the professional approach of Freestyle IT's project management. They were quick to bring in external help whenever needed and made sure the project was completed to our satisfaction."**

**Peter Bown, Executive Director, GTBank UK**



## Challenge

- Provide a modern, secure, scalable infrastructure
- Minimize risk to services and data
- Meet tight timescales

## Solution

- 13 x HP Proliant DL360 G5 server
- 2 x HP Proliant DL380 G5 server
- 58 x HP 146GB 10 SAS HDD
- 28 x HP 72GB 10 SAS HDD
- 15 x HP Hot Plug RPS
- 15 x HP Smart Array P400 write cache
- 15 x HP Care Pack

## Results

- State-of-the-art IT infrastructure in place
- Comprehensive disaster recovery capability
- Easy scalability for growth

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Peter Bown, *Executive Director, GTBank UK*



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## About Freestyle IT

Freestyle IT is a Solutions Provider and Value Added Reseller that has gained an enviable reputation with both customers and peers for delivering leading-edge, high quality solutions that exceed expectations. The company is in its 6th year of business and continues to enjoy successful growth while developing an impressive portfolio of vendor accreditations. Our most significant successes have been in the area of Virtualisation and Consolidation. Our key partners include HP, Sun, IBM, VMware, Citrix, Symantec, Microsoft, HDS, Cisco and Net Apps.

If you have any business or IT issues that you think Freestyle IT could help with, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can be assured of friendly, well-informed advice and a genuine interest in helping you.