

Volume Ltd. Gains Instant ROI from Technology Upgrade



Volume Ltd.
Reading, England
www.volume.co.uk

Industry:

Professional Services

Annual Revenue:

US\$8.4 million

Employees:

70

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Database

Key Benefits:

- Implemented solution in-house in two months
- Migrated 50% of customer campaigns in six months
- Benefited from interoperability with .NET
- Guaranteed service levels of 99.8% availability to customers
- Supported 43% year-on-year growth in data
- Gained scalability to support 50% per annum revenue growth
- Cut energy costs by 40% within six months of implementation
- Halved hardware costs
- Gained almost instant ROI

“Oracle Database 11g enables us to punch above our weight in a highly competitive industry. It underpins our strategy to become the leading company in our sector.” – Chris Sykes, Managing Director, Volume Ltd.

New-generation marketing communications agency Volume Ltd. is building on its 50% year-on-year growth by offering customers unrivalled performance, reliability, and security for their business-critical campaigns following its upgrade to Oracle Database 11g.

Created in 1997, the company now supports some of the world’s largest organizations with enterprise-scale, multi-channel solutions. Industry leaders as diverse as Dell, Linde Group, and Yahoo! rely on Volume’s unique combination of creativity and technology to design and deliver sales campaigns, channel management solutions, online learning applications, and knowledge zones. Some 99% of campaigns are end-to-end managed and hosted by Volume and offer customers the highest availability and scalability for client-facing applications. Six months after go-live, Volume has migrated almost 50% of its business to Oracle Database 11g’s grid-based infrastructure platform. Oracle’s seamless interoperability with legacy development tools gives the agency the flexibility to continue running smaller campaigns on Microsoft’s .NET framework as it continues a phased migration to Oracle Database 11g.

Implemented in two months by Volume’s in-house team, Oracle Database 11g’s virtualized environment and advanced storage and compression functionality has cut hardware and energy costs significantly. Automated system management has streamlined the day-to-day workload of the company’s two IT engineers and will enable Volume to continue expanding without the need to increase support resources. Volume is set to leverage the power and functionality of Oracle Database 11g to outperform its midsized stature as it capitalizes on its value proposition, increases its footprint, and extends its lead over larger competitors.

“The potential financial benefits of Oracle Database 11g are exponential. Even more importantly, we have won the renewed confidence of our major customers who know that their applications are backed up by the most reliable IT platform available.”

Benoit Alvarez
Divisional Managing
Director and Head of
Software Development,
Volume Ltd.

Keeping Pace with Opportunities

Eleven years after it was founded, Volume’s ability to convert intelligence into revenue for customers was resulting in its data growing by 43% each year. The company’s success resulted in the development of interactive Web-based solutions for more than 10,000 users with hit rates of up to 20 million per day for its expanding customer base. Volume’s homegrown .NET and SQL Server-based infrastructure and development tools could no longer scale to meet its ambitious growth plans. The agency needed to build a technology platform with guaranteed resilience, availability, and manageability to handle its huge data loads and ensure its continued ability to provide the highest service levels for the delivery and hosting of enterprise-class solutions.

“Our existing technology hit a performance ceiling meaning that we ran the risk of being unable to meet the future performance and scalability needs of our customers,” said Chris Sykes, managing director, Volume Ltd. “A significant proportion of our revenue comes from hosting, for which clients need the assurance of unbreakable security and 24/7 access to their data. We needed an infrastructure platform that could keep pace with the opportunities being offered us while providing low cost of ownership so that we could continue to offer competitive solutions to customers.”

Managing Change with Confidence

Volume looked for a technology platform with the agility to meet dynamic market change and provide the creative development capabilities it needed to deliver innovative solutions to customers. To minimize disruption and risk, the agency wanted to avoid a big bang, full-scale migration. Volume needed to facilitate seamless migration of larger campaigns to the new technology while continuing to use .NET. Pain-free deployment and ease of use were also keys to ensure rapid adoption by Volume’s 14-strong development team.

“With more than 60 hosted applications and multiple live campaigns with real-time response requirements running concurrently we had no margin for error,” said Benoit Alvarez, divisional managing director and head of software development at Volume Ltd. “However the transition to Oracle Database 11g was relatively smooth and completely invisible to our customers.”

Single Data Platform

Oracle Database 11g's SecureFiles feature gives Volume a single platform for the storage, management, and back up of structured and unstructured customer data. The agency can now store images, audio, video, and other large objects in the database instead of as files in file systems. Oracle SecureFiles also boosts security with transparent encryption and deduplication.

"Oracle SecureFiles means we no longer need two separate repositories for storing our information assets and can support more types of data and gain faster access to it," Alvarez said. "This also streamlines backup, management, failover, and clustering."

Energy Costs Down 40%

Oracle Database 11g's automated storage management, advanced compression, and data partitioning features have resulted in more efficient disk usage and enabled Volume to carry out a major hardware refresh. The company has reduced its server inventory by 50% while driving down energy costs by 40% within six months of implementation.

"Halving server numbers represents a significant cost saving," Sykes said. "With energy demands from information processing systems rising all the time, Oracle is helping us benefit from the financial advantages of going green."

Automated System Management

Another Oracle Database 11g feature—Enterprise Manager Grid Control—has self-healing capabilities that have automated many routine database management tasks and maximized uptime, enabling Volume to guarantee 99.8% applications availability to customers.

"Our two full-time IT support people now spend far less time on day-to-day fire fighting, which enables them to work proactively with business users and explore all the benefits Oracle Database 11g can offer us," Alvarez said.

Technology-Driven Competitive Advantage

Volume is leveraging many of Oracle Database 11g's advanced features to work smarter and cut costs throughout the full

information lifecycle. Oracle's Optimizer fine-tunes data retrieval to continually speed access and deliver faster response times for the applications used by Volume's customers. Oracle Flashback Database helps guard against data corruptions by providing the capability to query historical data and perform self-service repair to recover while the database is online.

Volume is evaluating the full range of Oracle Database 11g's behind-the-scene tools such as off-site back up and workload capture and replay to ensure continuous performance improvement. The agency is also looking at Oracle Audit Vault to improve security and compliance with a full audit history of all transactions.

Managing Future Business Needs

Volume gained an almost instant financial return on its investment in Oracle Database 11g, even though the agency is currently using less than 20% of its functionality.

"The potential financial benefits of Oracle Database 11g are exponential," Alvarez said. "Even more importantly, we have won the renewed confidence of our major customers who know that their applications are backed up by the most reliable IT platform available."

"We are only 70 people but multinational companies entrust us with customer-facing campaigns that are key to their success and reputation," Sykes added. "Oracle Database 11g gives us a solid foundation from which we can bid for even bigger and more complex projects with blue-chip companies. It opens up new worlds for us and sets us apart from our rivals who are playing catch up."

Why Oracle?

Oracle Database 11g was the obvious choice for Volume as it offered the combined advantages of unparalleled performance and interoperability with .NET. Initial reluctance by the company's in-house team to make the transition from their legacy platform to a radically new environment was replaced by enthusiasm for Oracle Database 11g's ease of operation and ability to manage next generation business systems.

“Our IT staff was understandably wary of the business disruption that a major system change might cause, but after attending Oracle’s workshops they became positively evangelical about 11g,” Sykes said.

Implementation Process

Volume anticipated that implementing Oracle Database 11g would take four months, but the agency went live in only two months using its in-house team to carry out the implementation and data migration.

“We experienced a few issues, which were mainly due to the complexities of switching to a completely new system and our lack of Oracle experience,” Alvarez said. “We were delighted to go live in half the time we anticipated and without the need for external consultants.”

Advice from Volume Ltd

- Do not make the mistake of thinking that Oracle Database 11g is only for large companies. It opens the door to new opportunities for medium-sized businesses and enables them to compete with larger organizations.
- Implementing Oracle Database 11g is not as expensive as you might think. In our experience the pain was less and the rewards far greater than we anticipated.

Volume Ltd. leverages its creative expertise to design, deliver, host, and support online marketing campaigns and multichannel solutions for some of the world’s largest organizations.