WILLIS TOWERS WATSON

KEYSOURCE
CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTS

CLIENT: WILLIS TOWERS WATSON (WTW)
SERVICE: GLOBAL IT INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSFORMATION
DATE: FEBRUARY 2018

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Keysource have been working with Towers Watson for over10 years as their European critical environment partner. In 2016 Towers Watson merged with international insurance provider; Willis Group. Following the merger, the business embarked on a global IT transformation project to consolidate and migrate all internal and client data to common platforms.

As the enlarged business' data centre transformation partner, Keysource provided the initial consultancy and evaluation of Willis Towers Watson's existing systems and requirements. The team also worked with WTW to understand their future strategy and requirements, and proposed a number of potential options.

Having recommended an option, Keysource were appointed to develop a framework for the business' strategic upgrade of two UK data centres, which now needed to support 38 major European offices as well as smaller satellite offices.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Delivering an additional 1.2 MW of power to two existing data centres in Ipswich and Reigate to meet Willis Towers Watson's need for increased capacity, improved resiliency and high security

- Upgrades to all critical power infrastructure to meet resiliency requirements

- Design and deployment of a new highly efficient cooling solution which allows flexible rack density

- Installation of a comprehensive monitoring and management system to give WTW full visibility across their estate

THE PROJECT

There were a number of challenges the teams faced with this project. Extensive preparation was essential to addressing the logistical challenges presented by the brief.

A pre-planned communications schedule was created that included all meetings and milestones, this meant the project could be delivered without disruption to key business activities. By ensuring clear points of contact for each aspect of the project from the outset meant that any emerging issues were discussed and resolved quickly.

Delivering the project in a live working environment added complexity. The existing facilities were still in use during the upgrade, meaning any downtime would have been detrimental to the business.

To avoid this, Keysource designed a programme of phased works, with contingency planning, which provided transparency over the risks associated with each phase, allowing works to be scheduled accordingly.

In addition, the data centres were located within Willis Towers Watson's fully-operational Ipswich and Reigate office. This required Keysource to ensure construction did not disrupt the working environment of more than 1,000 employees in each building and, crucially, that all staff were safe in and around the construction site. Working around the confines of the sites also proved challenging. The Ipswich site, a Grade I listed building, needed particularly careful management during the construction phase. One example involved removing three 25-tonne generators from the roof and replacing them with a new fit-for-purpose compound.

THE RESULTS

Despite the challenges, the project was managed seamlessly, without a single server fail or downtime throughout the entirety of the upgrade.

Keysource's approach to planning was a major factor in the success of the project. Initial design work and discussions began as early as October 2016 – six months before work commenced.

One of the most important requirements for Keysource to deliver in this project was longevity. Willis Towers Watson has undergone several acquisitions and transformations over the past decade, with each requiring a significant IT and infrastructure upgrade to allow the new business' information to assimilate.

The resulting data centre is more than just an upgraded technical specification as a consequence. The client has been able to consolidate its data centre estate, reduce overheads, offer a secure, highly available, service to customers and improve the efficiency of its business functions, helping cement it as a global leader in its sector.

> "The delivery of the new data centre expansion was a crucial part of our IT strategy and has taken us to another level of resiliency. From designing to our requirements and delivering the project without downtime, the team at Keysource were instrumental in the project's success."
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> **Paul West, Global Data Centre Director, WTW**