

Gibraltar (Ash Forest) Server, Infrastructure, User Access Devices, Active Directory, Data & Mail Messaging Migration Service

The key to the successful migration of GibLan was a full understanding of the existing system, the new proposed ASH forest, and from this knowledge, developing a migration strategy/plan that smoothly migrated the system whilst ensuring as little interruption of services to users as possible.



Prior to the project start Akhter performed a detailed audit of the current system (the discovery process) in order to identify potential problem areas so that solutions could be found and planned for at an early stage. Akhter's experience has proven that good discovery procedures and planning is critical and makes the actual migration process much more efficient with fewer problems.

Akhter, in liaison with the Mod System Design Authority, studied the proposed migration and were very confident that the project could be implemented satisfactorily with minimal disruption to the user. The approach to such a project was centred on the use of the Quest Migration tools. Quest has developed these products over a number of years and the tools have been honed using real world experience.

Akhter understood that the success of the GibLan migration depended upon a deep understanding and correct use of these tools, therefore had been working very closely with Quest to ensure that their engineers had the necessary skills to use the tools effectively. In addition to the Quest tools, a thorough knowledge of the ASH forest was required. Akhter had worked very closely with the System Design Authority to ensure that they fully understood the design and implementation of the ASH forest. During the migration, Akhter followed a migration strategy/plan that maintained adequate documentation as the project progressed. Any changes to the migration strategy/plan were reviewed and discussed/approved with the relevant parties before being implemented.

Even with detailed planning unexpected issues can arise during a migration. These problems can sometimes arise from known product issues. To resolve these types of problems Akhter had adequate backup support to assist engineers on site and being Microsoft Partners have a direct line to the Microsoft Product teams when problem escalation is required.

The involvement of site administrators/technicians during the migration is also very important and these personnel needed to be made to feel that they played an important role in the project. Akhter's project manager also ensured that site personnel were kept well informed of the project status and were provided with the appropriate information that assisted them in maintaining the ASH forest after its implementation.



Summary - project details

The Gibraltar IT infrastructure consisted of a large number of servers running a mix of NT4 and W2000 server operating systems, approximately 500 workstations running various versions of Windows XP Pro and a variety of office and business critical applications that had become difficult to operate and support within the Mod network. Predominately their messaging and collaboration system was based on Microsoft Exchange 5.5 and there security model had become ineffective.

The key goal of the project was to replace the ageing servers, the majority of workstations and to introduce up-to-date Server and Workstation operating systems and business applications that could be easily maintained locally as well as remotely in the future.

The majority of this work had to be carried out in real time to minimise the down time of an operational base.

The main tasks were:

- Project Start up – clear definition of aims and goals
- Build new server farm (creation of Gold disks as required)
- Test and commission new server farm
- Build and test new Workstations (creation of Gold disks as required)
- Legacy Server data migration to new Server farm (Quest tool-set)
- Microsoft Exchange 5.5 to Exchange 2003 migration (Quest tool-set)
- Integration of new workstations on to new Ash Forest (GibLan) Domain
- Testing and commissioning of new network
- IT support training
- User Training
- Project documentation and end of Project Closure