

Browsium Case Study: Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

UK government agency saves an estimated 97% by migrating their PC infrastructure to Windows 7 and IE9 using Browsium Ion



HMRC was formed in 2005 with the consolidation of the UK's Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise into a single government agency responsible for the collection of taxes and the payment of some forms of state support. The organization was looking to migrate its aging Windows XP and IE6 PC population forward to Windows 7 and IE9 while ensuring no service interruption for hundreds of business-critical web applications.

Situation – 85K PCs Blocked from Migration

HMRC had approximately 85,000 managed PCs running Windows XP and Internet Explorer 6 (IE6). Since 2010 they had been working with their partners to determine the best and most cost-effective way to migrate these aging PCs to a modern PC platform: Windows 7 and IE8.

HMRC runs hundreds of internal line-of-business applications that their employees depend on to do their jobs. The organization found their migration fundamentally blocked by a set of legacy web applications which were not compatible with the new IE platform. HMRC's Aspire IT consortium (comprised of Capgemini, Fujitsu, and others) attempted to solve this problem through a variety of traditional solutions, including application upgrades, application rewrites, and virtualization. Application upgrades and virtualization were quickly dismissed due to cost and complexity.

The Aspire team then embarked on a quest for a more innovative solution, spurred by Phil Pavitt, the HMRC CIO, who delivered a directive to not only solve the problem cost-effectively, but ideally to do so using a Small/Medium Enterprise (SME) vendor to help the UK government attain its goal of moving significant portions of its IT outsourcing to smaller vendors.

HMRC Chief Information Officer, Phil Pavitt said "We know people have had issues with IE6 but an ingenious and cost-effective workaround has been provided by a small company called Browsium. This allows many of our systems that are dependent on IE6 to work alongside IE8 without any problems. IE8 will provide a better browsing experience while also providing access to information currently denied by the old browser."

Solution – Browsium Ion

In early 2012, Aspire engaged Browsium to determine if its Browsium Ion software could solve this difficult problem. A plan was quickly developed to remediate a few of HMRC's most complex applications using Browsium Ion as a proof-of-concept. That effort took approximately one week and was so successful that HMRC immediately moved on to an organization-wide project which began resolving issues on the 150 most-heavily-used of their nearly 600 IE6-dependent web applications.

HMRC's decision to embrace Browsium Ion unblocked their PC migration process. With Ion, all of the web applications HMRC employees rely on day-to-day can run in IE8 and IE9. This allows the Aspire team to upgrade the desktop operating systems and browsers for all employees without rewriting any applications. The initial plan has HMRC upgrading their Windows XP systems to IE8 (Microsoft's most current browser for the Windows XP platform) which will enable all of HMRC's employees to access both legacy applications and deploy modern web applications leveraging cloud- and HTML5-based solutions as well as social media applications, all within a single browser. Phase two of the plan involves migrating the desktop PCs to Windows 7 and IE9 before Microsoft ends support for Windows XP in 2014, with Browsium Ion continuing to provide backward compatibility for the legacy web applications.

Results - Migration has begun, with an estimated savings of £50-80 million

With Browsium Ion, HMRC is able to begin their browser migration on Windows XP and continue their migration to Windows 7 and IE9 without interruption. Alternate solutions proposed to HMRC were about 50 times the price of Browsium Ion. Rewriting would have yielded the same application functionality HMRC has today, but for a significant expense. Virtualization would have moved the application workloads to a massive server farm, consuming considerable implementation resources and network bandwidth, for a solution that will no longer be supported shortly after Windows XP's support lifecycle ends. The Browsium Ion solution represented a savings of over 97%, or £50-£80 million at HRMC's scale of 85,000 PCs, when compared with the alternatives.

Beyond the significant cost savings to unblock browser migration, enabling HMRC to move to IE8 today (and Windows 7 with IE9 in the near future) results in several benefits to their computing environment. The upgraded computing environment is more secure, more social media savvy, and allows HMRC to adopt other modern web services and applications to drive productivity and innovation in their enterprise.

