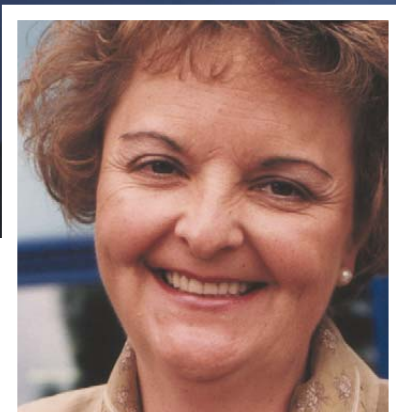




Xicon at work



"Xicon was more cost-effective than the other proposals we received. They now monitor all our Oracle databases remotely."



Julie Savage,
Information Systems Manager,
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

"Xicon developed several of our Oracle database systems and continues to create new applications. Oracle is our preferred corporate database," said Savage.

Looking after the sites once used for nuclear research and development is a vital job. Now responsible for environmentally safe decommissioning and site restoration, the work of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) is supported by many IT systems. By using an Oracle database administration support service from Xicon Consulting Limited, UKAEA has controlled costs, ensured peace of mind and gained new skills.



The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (www.ukaea.org.uk) pioneered the development of nuclear energy. Its current task involves decommissioning old reactors and other radioactive facilities although it also contributes to European fusion research. Employing 2,290 people, the main sites are at Dounreay, Windscale, Risley, Culham, Winfrith and Harwell.

Information Technology is used widely for purposes ranging from financial management to site security. Information Systems Manager Julie Savage says that most systems use Oracle 8i database technology. One of UKAEA's key development partners for the Oracle environment is Xicon Consulting Limited.



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"As the number of Oracle-based systems started to grow, we found ourselves with a serious database administration issue," explained Savage.

"Xicon was also more cost-effective than the other proposals we received," adds Savage.

Growing Usage

Having adopted this database standard a few years ago, the number of Oracle-based systems steadily increased. While most are implemented at Harwell for UK-wide use, others were procured locally. This strategy soon raised the question of how best to provide database administration support.

A diverse IT environment underlined the problem for the support staff. For example, in-house applications were developed in Microsoft Visual Basic, Oracle Forms and Borland's Delphi which made it difficult to maintain up-to-date knowledge in all these environments. The database related tasks were few and seldom but none the less important including database server installation, writing scripts, recovery and designing backup strategies. The situation eventually led to a skills gap for database administration.

In late 1999, the UKAEA reviewed the options for an Oracle database administration support service. If training was given to create an internal service, then losing key personnel to the private sector might follow. The organization had to balance systems availability, performance and cost-effectiveness alongside the continual need for applications support.

It soon became clear that a flexible, remote database administration service was the answer, avoiding the need to provide office accommodation. Remote monitoring had to cover tasks such as backup checking and test environment reloads while providing a different level of support for each database.

After reviewing several external proposals, UKAEA decided that Oracle Solutions Provider Xicon provided exactly the right answers. It also built on a long term relationship involving the development of several Oracle applications such as a data warehouse for finance and a supplier information system. To underpin the reliability of UKAEA systems across the UK, Xicon suggested its Oracle DBA Support Service.



Xicon at work

Assured Implementation

Providing immediate peace of mind, the contract started in early 2000. It relies on Oracle Enterprise Manager, a web-enabled system management tool. Installed on six database servers and interrogated remotely by Xicon, it helped manage the Oracle environment including database changes, diagnostics and tuning. Any remedial tasks are divided between the UKAEA and Xicon as appropriate.

First line support is handled by the Information Systems & Technology Department with Xicon providing dial-in

"Xicon monitors all our Oracle databases remotely but the level of support is matched to the application need and varies from server to server. Xicon has also been working to get our Oracle databases as fine tuned as possible."



and telephone support to UKAEA IT personnel. The regular monitoring service also includes the creation of backup strategies for live and test databases plus other ad-hoc work. UKAEA now has easy access to highly skilled staff without the need to increase in-house personnel.

If a database recovery or a complex applications restart is called for, Xicon offers telephone assistance. For database changes, detailed technical instructions are created or the work is done in conjunction with UKAEA personnel. Everything is tailored to meet stringent service levels with Xicon contributing a "virtual" team for the smooth running of the Oracle environment.

key features

Business Profile The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is responsible for the safe decommissioning of nuclear reactors and other radioactive sites.

Solution Summary Database Administration (DBA) Support Service for Oracle 8i databases.

Key Benefits

- Handles Oracle DBA tasks remotely
- Supports in-house IT team
- Controls IT Expenditure

Oracle Software

- Oracle Enterprise Server
- Oracle 8i Database

Hardware

- Dell & Compaq NT Servers

Number of Users

- 2,290



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SOLUTION
PARTNER

"Thanks to Xicon's DBA Support Service, I no longer worry about database administration tasks. I can also ring Xicon for advice on Oracle technology or when looking at a new system."

No Worries

The service has now run successfully for almost two years with no problems. Reflecting the importance that UKAEA places in Oracle technology, database servers are added to the contract as required.

Savage adds that it's also proved cheaper than employing an Oracle database administrator while working arrangements mean some skills are being transferred in-house. For example, proposed database amendments are made internally to strict change control procedures. Xicon and UKAEA may work together to solve any database problems including those spotted during routine health checks.

Such close teamwork has paid dividends on occasions. For example, when UKAEA suffered a major hardware failure, Xicon stepped in at short notice to assist with the appropriate DBA skills. As to the future, UKAEA may add further databases to the support agreement soon. Backed by an assured database administration service, UKAEA can fully concentrate on its important work of restoring the environment.

"We have the benefits of an expert database administration service but that knowledge is being moved through the UKAEA team as well. We have a fully-rounded partnership with Xicon and that's very important to us," concludes Savage.



Xicon is an Independent British company specialising in Oracle systems and provides a wide range of skills across all sectors of industry and commerce world-wide covering Products, Consultancy, Training and Support.

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