

DP World use SRO's Dynamic Upgrader (SDU) to ensure trouble-free Maximo upgrade with no downtime.

In the current economic climate any business asset must be kept operational at all times to ensure business efficiency is maximised. Whether the asset is tangible, like a crane or intangible such as a piece of software the criteria is the same – minimum downtime is required to ensure maximum ROI.

DP World Southampton, a joint venture between DP World and Associated British Ports, operates the second-largest container terminal in the UK. Founded in 1985, the facility has grown to cover a site of more than 200 acres (81,000 sq. m), with four deep water berths, one short-sea berth, 14 ship-to-shore gantry cranes, one mobile harbour crane and over 100 straddle carriers to load and unload the containers to and from ships and onto trucks and trains. Two large workshops handle maintenance for these crucial assets. The terminal employs over 780 people, and has an annual capacity of over two million TEU (Twenty Foot Equivalent Units).

Avoiding the traditional upgrade route

The company had been using V6 of Maximo to deal with their maintenance scheduling but during 2009 wanted to upgrade to V7 as David Bowers, Engineering Planning and Quality Manager at DP World, explained. "We needed to improve our DR capability as our system was dependent on a single server. This coupled with the additional functionality of V7 were the key drivers behind our upgrade."

Although the benefits for upgrading were high, the proscribed IBM upgrade procedure would mean that DP World would be faced with a number of days downtime which was unacceptable as Bill Wallace of SRO outlined. "With a traditional upgrade the normal method would be to employ a consultant who would carry out trials for a number of days with the aim of minimising the amount of downtime from anything to a few hours through to multiple days. Both the costs of the consultant and the downtime are obviously expensive and DP world wanted to avoid going down this route."

Capturing live data

To overcome these problems SRO have developed the SRO Dynamic Upgrader (SDU) that enables Maximo upgrades with no downtime while allowing for rigorous testing and user acceptance. Bill continued, "The SDU removes the needs for both expensive consultancy costs to trial the upgrade and any downtime. There is never a need to turn off an online server and the upgrade process itself is only carried out once."



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The SDU works by firstly installing a tool on the live server to capture all data changes. Then the Maximo database is copied to a new server, leaving the original version to carry on working while all changes to it are logged.

SRO started this process in January 2010. "It caused us no disruption at all," reported David. "No inconvenience to the users and importantly no downtime."

"After we had completed the first stage we used the standard IBM upgrade tools to carry out the upgrade to the new server without affecting the live data," said Bill. "Once this process was completed we then populated the upgraded server with the captured data from the live server, immediately bringing it up to date."

Rigorous testing and training period

"We completed the entire process within a week," continued Bill. "This then gave DP World an upgraded server with up-to-date data on which they could carry out testing and training on over a number of weeks. In the meantime their original system continued in use as before, still capturing changes that could be transferred to the upgraded server whenever they wished."

This transfer period, which in DP World's case was 6-8 weeks, gives an organisation time to carry out thorough testing and training before actually switching with no downtime.

"Although the new server was running V7, all the users were still imputing data on the V6 server during this period," said Bill. "This also gives the advantage of upgrading the users over a prolonged period. So if for example they were spread geographically they do not all have to be upgraded at exactly the same time. This provides a lot of flexibility for overworked teams who are trying to deal with a far-flung upgrade."

Benefits of SDU

The SDU has provided a number of benefits as David reported. "Now that the production and staging systems are on identical hardware it gives us a lot of flexibility. We can test, patch and carry out development work on live data without having to worry if something goes wrong. This has greatly increased our DR capability and enabled us to surpass the requirements of our internal audit."

Commenting on the upgrade process, David concluded. "Normally an upgrade is a fraught affair with tight timescales and rushing to minimise downtime by working under pressure in out-of-office hours. With the SDU all this was removed. We were able to plan and accommodate testing and training around the normal working day on live data as we knew the original system was continuing to operate as normal.

"Anything that removes downtime has a fast ROI and the SDU certainly provided that. Without doubt I will use it for future upgrades of Maximo."

Contact details

To find out more about SRO Solutions and how the SDU can assist you with your Maximo upgrade, please visit our website at:

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