

Queensland Energy Resources

A Sundata Case study



SUNDATA

Blue Chip IT...Small Company Adaptability

As a technology and resources development company, QER relies on robust and highly functional IT systems to ensure the integrity, accessibility and security of its proprietary project information. Those systems need to remain adaptable as the project moves through different development phases. Sundata has played an important role in ensuring QER's systems remain 'fit for purpose' without compromising IT management standards.

QER established its IT systems and infrastructure to support construction and operation of a \$130m technology demonstration facility. Once that phase was completed the company's IT needs shifted back to project development and engineering for a billion dollar commercial project. By outsourcing IT services to Sundata, QER was able to rightsize their team and invest in technologies that would scale readily as required.

About Queensland Energy Resources

QER is an Australian company seeking to address looming shortfalls of conventional transport fuel through sustainable development of Queensland's rich kerogen deposits.

Resource project development requires the use of a range of specialist IT systems and QER has utilised a full suite of them: geological data management and modelling; mine design and optimisation; project management (spanning three countries); CAD design; geographic information systems; sophisticated process modelling, monitoring and control; environmental monitoring and laboratory management systems; along with the usual enterprise and office management systems.

In 2011-14, the company established and operated a \$130m facility near Gladstone in Queensland to demonstrate the company's Paraho II™ 'surface retorting' technology - the world's first kerogen based fuel production facility. Once the successful trials were completed, the focus shifted back to development of a commercial scale project. As the timing of project investment depends on external market conditions, the company needs to remain lean and agile through the current development phase.



COMPANY:

QER Pty Ltd

LOCATIONS:

QLD - Australia

INDUSTRY:

Oil & Energy

DESCRIPTION:

QER is working towards the sustainable commercial production of high quality transport fuels from Australia's rich oil shale resources.

SUNDATA SOLUTIONS:

- IaaS
- Managed Services
- IT Governance & Advice

The Challenge

At the peak of QER's Paraho II trial, QER employed more than 130 people and there were several hundred contractors working on the project. An internal team of eight specialists managed QER's IT operations.

"At that stage our IT was 100% in-house," says Peter Zambelli, QER's General Manager. "This meant employing a full range of IT skills, which was a costly exercise. Moving back into a project development phase, we needed to rationalise our systems to ensure they were affordable and appropriate, without compromising functionality or data security and integrity."

Solution

QER took the decision to outsource the IT function. Sundata was selected to partner with the company on the strength of previous experience and managed the transition from in-house IT to outsourced managed service.

Peter says QER was keen to work with a similar sized company to preserve cultural alignment and flexibility. "Sundata is not just providing a service – essentially we are trusting them to fill the role of CIO, providing strategic advice and acting in the best interests of the company."

With a managed service taking care of rightsizing from a skills perspective, QER and Sundata immediately began consolidating IT infrastructure. Owning and operating on premise hardware had been found to come at a huge cost – not just in 'keeping up' as technology advances, but also the overhead expenses of rent for the floor space a server room occupies within a CBD office location, cooling and physical security.

"Sundata has helped us to rationalise IT as the company changes to systems that are fit for purpose, without compromising integrity"

QER's existing hardware was at the end of its warranty. Coinciding with an office relocation, Sundata supported QER's transition from in-house hardware to Infrastructure as a Service.

Subscribing to the computing capacity required within Sundata's private data-centre not only consolidated costs by packaging fully supported infrastructure and services into a single monthly cost, but also solved the problem of scalability in response to the peaks and troughs of opportunity.

With the core value of the company tied up in intellectual property assets, security and integrity of data was a top priority. QER's hosted environment is protected by Sundata's managed firewall service, providing monitoring, real-time alerting, incident detection, remediation advice, reporting and change management.

Outcomes

QER's IT budget was halved while still incorporating all professional services, accommodation and equipment. Savings in maintenance and management costs alone resulting from the retirement of QER's ageing server hardware were estimated at \$200,000 per year.

Peter describes the shift to Sundata's Infrastructure as a Service and managed services as being the best of both worlds. "Working with Sundata has given us the opportunity to access the governance and integrity of a larger organisation, with the agility to adapt that comes from working with a smaller IT Partner.

"By taking the time to understand our business requirements, translating those into IT requirements and providing the range of capabilities needed for implementation, Sundata has been able to help make IT work for the business in its different phases."

"It makes a big difference to us to have an IT Partner who can provide personalised service at a highly professional standard."