



XebiaLabs Customer Case Study

Cable & Wireless



Key Facts

Industry: Telecommunications

Company: Cable & Wireless Communications

Employees: 3,977

Market leader in telecommunications with 3.7 million mobile customers

Environment

- Windows
- Linux
- VMS
- COBOL

Benefits

- Reduce manual effort
- Simplify and streamline build/deploy process
- Remove dependency on VMS skills
- Migrate to a single-version control system



Cable & Wireless Communications calls on XL Deploy to increase productivity

International telecommunications company eliminates risk from their build/deploy process

Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC), a full-service telecommunications company with main operations in the Caribbean and Latin America, provides mobile, broadband and fixed line services to 16 markets. Their IT function, based in London, develops and supports the strategically important Liberate platform used by CWC's operating business units. Liberate provides billing, customer care, order management and related core functions to support CWC's business operations. The fast pace of the business demands very frequent deployments of Liberate to multiple environments in different countries and time zones.

The Challenge

The volume of deployments is substantial. Liberate is installed in 21 production environments – all on different releases of the software – and approximately twice that many UAT (User Acceptance Test) environments, plus 10 system test environments. Typically a quarter of the UAT environments are refreshed weekly, a proportion of the test environments are updated daily, and the 21 production environments have at least one product deployment per week.

Furthermore, Liberate consists of a suite of applications on different technologies including VMS, Linux and Windows in a heterogeneous multi-tier stack, with a different set of build/deploy tools for each application and two version control systems. Additionally, because of the interdependencies between applications, deploying a new build on one tier generally usually entails a new build on all tiers.

In consequence, the application deployment process historically involved many manual steps, high levels of coordination and a huge dependency on highly knowledgeable teams with niche skills – leading to risky, stressful and labour intensive releases.

When the Company announced that it was moving the IT function (and most of the rest of its London teams) to Miami in 2014, the need to eliminate risk and improve the process became much more pressing.



Challenges before XL Deploy

- Different set of build/deploy tools for each application with 21 production environments
- Two version control systems
- Highly manual process and need for extensive co-ordination
- Team relocation meant highly experienced skills would be in even shorter supply

Life after XL Deploy

- Reduced requirements for knowledge transfer and documentation
- Eliminated risk from application deployment and release process
- Removed backlogs
- Expected to increase productivity by 100% by dedicating resources to more valuable tasks



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The Solution

The main objectives for CWC's Liberate team in choosing an application deployment tool were to reduce manual effort, simplify and streamline the build/deploy process, remove the dependency on OpenVMS skills and highly knowledgeable (and expensive) individuals, and migrate to a single version control system. In short, eliminate risk from the process and improve reliability.

The IT team looked at various options for automating application deployment and, considering the idiosyncrasies of the platform, generated a list of requirements for the new application deployment automation tool. After evaluating alternatives and establishing a business case, it soon became apparent that XL Deploy, provided in the UK via Cachet partnering with XebiaLabs, was the best option. "All costs of the licences compared favourably against the cost of customisation required by the open source alternative" clarifies Stephen Judd, Liberate Lead Architect.

The requirements were these:

1. Multi-platform: The system had to be able to deploy to environments running three different operating systems: Linux, Windows and OpenVMS. In particular, since the center of gravity of the suite resides on OpenVMS, it was essential that the tool could deploy, or be made to deploy, software on that operating system, without customization. XL Deploy is agentless across all target platforms and this enabled CWC to extend it simply to OpenVMS.
2. Audit and tracking capabilities: The teams should be able to easily see what had been deployed (which release), where and when. This had previously been tracked on a Wiki page and with spreadsheets, which was manual and error-prone. XL Deploy maintains an inventory of deployments.
3. Simplification of Deployment mechanism: The ability to simplify the process was one of the main drivers. "We wanted to simplify the deployment mechanism. With XL Deploy, it is a push-button exercise" said Michael Seddon, Deployment specialist.
4. Ease of use for non-specialists: The system had to allow the company reduce its dependency on a few, very knowledgeable individuals – best employed in high value tasks.
5. Integration with Jenkins: CWC uses Jenkins to manage all the build scripts; therefore, the selected option had to integrate with Jenkins.
6. Extensibility: Should the capabilities of the tool need to be extended in the future, it had to be written in a language CWC felt comfortable in. The skills of the company are in Java, and XL Deploy provides plugins for Java, enabling CWC to extend the capabilities as and when required.
7. Availability of APIs: Similarly, in case the company needed to build or enhance the tool, for instance with a completely new plugin – as they eventually did, the APIs would enable them to do so with minimal integration work.



It is very obvious that extensibility is in the essence of the product: XebiaLabs have built it with embedded extensibility – and it makes a difference



XebiaLabs have exceeded our expectations with the support they've provided us



CWC ran a proof of concept to ensure XL Deploy could fulfil the requirements and, most importantly, that it could be used for CWC's legacy environment. Additional objectives were to ensure that CWC could model the production and non-production environments and evaluate the effort and skillset required to use the tool operationally.

XL Deploy passed with flying colors: "We could see how the framework of XL Deploy works. It gave us the confidence that XL Deploy is not only extendable, but also really straight forward to implement", says Stephen Judd.

The company started the planning process to determine the order in which the applications would convert.

The first phase of the project was to migrate the easiest applications first and very early in the process, CWC was able to have 50% of the applications on XL Deploy, already a substantial reduction of risk.

The Result

XL Deploy has allowed CWC to eliminate risk from the application deployment and release process by removing all the manual tasks and the requirements for highly skilled individuals – who had previously spent much of their time doing deployments or preparing for one. The backlogs disappeared and CWC expects, with XL Deploy, to increase productivity by 100% simply by dedicating these resources to more highly valuable tasks.

Implementing XL Deploy has also reduced the requirement for knowledge transfer and documentation, and provided an accurate, complete and up-to-date inventory of what's deployed where.

"XL Deploy not only met all our requirements, but it does so very efficiently" says Judd. "The system was also very straight-forward to customise with the plugin framework it provides". "It is very obvious that extensibility is in the essence of the product: XebiaLabs have built it with embedded extensibility – and it makes a difference".

Whilst the implementation was straightforward, CWC did use XebiaLabs' assistance from time to time. "We received incredible help from XebiaLabs to create our plugin", praises Judd. "XebiaLabs have exceeded our expectations with the support they've provided us".

About XebiaLabs

XebiaLabs develops enterprise-scale Continuous Delivery and DevOps software, providing companies with the visibility, automation and control to deliver software faster and with less risk. Global market leaders rely on XebiaLabs to meet the increasing demand for accelerated and more reliable software releases.

The XebiaLabs DevOps Platform for Continuous Delivery at Enterprise Scale



Release Orchestration

Orchestrate, automate and get visibility into release pipelines



Deployment Automation

Automate and standardize complex application deployments



DevOps Intelligence

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For more information and a free trial please visit www.xebialabs.com.