

# Center Parcs and BT Lynx' 10 year technology partnership

“We were keen to establish a real partnership. We didn't want to outsource everything, neither did we want to perform certain key tasks in-house. Lynx got to know our organisation, its systems and requirements, adding value as the business moved forward.”

**Anthony Wood,**  
ICT Infrastructure Manager,  
Center Parcs UK

Center Parcs revolutionised the holiday market in Holland 30 years ago, and opened its first village in the UK in 1987, offering short break holidays year-round. The UK business now operates four villages at Sherwood Forest, Elveden Forest, Longleat Forest and Whinfall Forest. Each 400-acre site provides high quality accommodation, a wide range of sports, leisure and spa activities, plus multiple restaurants, bars and retail outlets.

## Overview

### Why BT Lynx?

“In 1997 we wanted a new company to handle PC requirements,” continues Wood. “We wanted to consolidate our entire desktop cycle through a single provider, to create a seamless cycle from specification through procurement to installation, maintenance and disposal.

“We wanted a one-stop-shop, including technical advice on technology beyond our expertise. We looked at three companies, recommended by HP, and Lynx ticked all the boxes. It was local to our Head Office but offered nationwide coverage, could supply hardware at the right price - we'd realised that buying direct wasn't the right approach for us - and also provide maintenance services. Crucially, Lynx had the consultancy expertise; it wasn't just a 'box shifting' company. Lynx was a good match: big enough to have the buying power and providing nationwide coverage, yet small enough to deliver the personal attention we wanted.”

### Flexibility and value for money

BT Lynx's relationship soon extended beyond the desktop to cover servers and networking; work ranged from one-off projects to more wide-ranging strategic activity, from desktop software delivery and upgrades to implementing a new IP-based virtual private network (VPN).

“Center Parcs has seen good returns from its partnership with Lynx - good value for money,” says Wood. “We have flexibility rather than having to employ people for specialist jobs; we can outsource non-core activities to Lynx for a specific requirement, in security for example, or hosting. We don't have to invest in additional resources, in hiring and training staff, providing holiday cover, and all the other problems associated with in-house operations. We haven't got a big IT department and this flexible approach provides us with value for money.”

### Assured data centre services

In 2003, Center Parcs UK launched its first UK website. Previously, its online presence ran from the Dutch parent company. “When the UK business split off, we needed our own site,” says Wood. “We were happy with Lynx and knew it provided data centre and hosting, so asked it to quote for our Internet gateway. We had faith in its technical abilities, in particular in getting technical issues resolved. Lynx provided a competitive price.” The result was a fully managed hosting service, operated by BT Lynx through a secure, environmentally controlled facility in Leeds.

“This was a great project and, together with the web site, introduced us to how Lynx works in terms of its project management skills and methodologies,” says Wood. “Lynx is a very progressive company in that area, very adaptive and customer-focused in terms of its project methodologies and tools, including portals to keep us updated on developments.”

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The BT Lynx-hosted website includes an essential link to Center Parcs' short break booking engine. “Our web presence is vitally important,” says Wood. “Short break holidays is a complex business and the site has to explain all the details and present special offers, helping ensure guests get the most out of their holiday – and our guests are very web savvy. The BT Lynx-hosted site enables guests to enter search criteria and requirements, which are fired off to the booking engine at our other hosting centre. Without our main website, we'd be blind in terms of the booking engine.”

It's vital the site is available at all times, delivering the speed and performance that guests and the business demand. “The web has become a very important channel, responsible for over 50% of guest bookings,” says Wood. The data centre deployed for Center Parcs was specifically designed to optimise system availability and performance, through a highly efficient and

resilient backbone network and Internet access infrastructure. Extensive monitoring and proactive management ensure 24/7 service delivery for [www.centerparcs.co.uk](http://www.centerparcs.co.uk). Wood adds, “Lynx manages the entire service. Since the site went live in 2003 it's been pretty much trouble-free. Lynx has stayed on the ball, telling us about potential issues before they become problems, taking a proactive approach.”

### Great project support

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The Internet gateway was combined with replacing Center Parcs UK's point-to-point network, its inter-site links, with an IP-based VPN. “This was a great project and, together with the web site, introduced us to how Lynx works in terms of its project management skills and methodologies,” says Wood. “Lynx is a very progressive company in that area, very adaptive and customer-focused in terms of its project methodologies and tools, including portals to keep us updated on developments.

“In terms of benefits gained and cost savings in particular, replacing the point-to-point links has enabled Center Parcs UK to save around £30,000 each year.”

BT Lynx provided an offline pilot for Microsoft Windows XP and Server 2003 at the company's Head Office, plus a new Cisco ethernet network and the upgrade from Windows NT to XP. “Following the successful pilot, we rolled out to the villages and replaced the existing network,” says Wood. “The Lynx people did such a good job on the pilot that roll-out to the villages was seamless, with no interruption to our business. The project team was a mix of my own and Lynx people, and we worked very well together.”

### It's a people thing

Wood adds, “Lynx's people are an important reason why Center Parcs chose Lynx. You not only have a 'one-stop-shop', you also have a personal contact you can rely on. So Lynx not only uses progressive methods but the quality of its people is also excellent – Lynx consultants are very professional, highly skilled people.

“Our Lynx Account Manager meets with us regularly, to go through issues, and constantly 'fights our corner' to get issues resolved and make things happen. If you go with a really big supplier and buy services as a commodity, you lose that personal touch. Center Parcs decided not to follow that route and instead looked for the 'value add'. Lynx understands Center Parcs UK, it knows what the business needs and what it doesn't. My experience with Lynx has been consistently good. Its consultants are good at their job and provide the business with added value, while the quality of its project management and documentation is similarly good.”

### Customer profile

Industry: Leisure

Solution: Web Services, Deployment Services, Maintenance Services, Consultancy Services

Technology: Microsoft Windows XP, Microsoft Server 2003, Cisco Networking

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