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The Choice of Leaders

Retirement Advantage

Client:
Retirement Advantage

Industry:
Financial services

Location:
Worthing (head office)
London

Acora services provided:
- managed data back-up service
- business continuity testing and recovery
- third line service desk support for:
  - server infrastructure
  - storage infrastructure
  - network security infrastructure
  - internet and WAN connectivity

Previously known as MGM Advantage and Stonehaven, in 2015, the company changed its name to Retirement Advantage, merging the equity release and retirement income divisions.

The company specialises in providing products for people near or at retirement, helping them make the most of their savings and/or the value in their property. Products include the Guaranteed Annuity, providing the best possible lifetime income for individual circumstances, the Flexible Income Annuity and equity release products. The company sells its product range through financial advisers and a number of adviser networks and does not sell directly to the public.

Background/ challenges

In 2003 Retirement Advantage (formerly known as MGM Advantage) initially engaged with Acora on a fairly informal non-contractual basis for break fix support. But after Retirement Advantage suffered a fairly catastrophic failure of its exchange infrastructure, and the incumbent failed to resolve it, Acora was called in. They resolved the problem within 48 hours to get the business back up and running – that was after the business had suffered nearly two weeks of outage. This prompted the decision to move to Acora for that ongoing back-up service.

Retirement Advantage decided to move away from their incumbent and asked Acora to invest in and develop a very secure managed back-up service under a strict NDA. Working closely with Retirement Advantage, both companies overcame some of the initial challenges of building this type of solution and within 12-18 months the service was fully operational.

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> ❏❏ *Every day I get a set of status reports on all of the back-ups that are due to replicate off to Acora and I get that without fail. If there are issues with things taking longer than they should do, cases are raised automatically and the issues are dealt with quickly.* ❏❏

Andy Gregory
Head of IT

> ❏❏ *Acora's accreditations and high service and security standards mean I can absolutely rely on them to help look after the most fundamental part of our business – our data. As we continue to grow our business, the value add we will get from Acora is being able to tap in to their knowledge and expertise for advice and validation on IT strategy and initiatives going forward.* ❏❏

Andy Gregory
Head of IT

Acora services

As a Financial Services organisation Retirement Advantage has a critical role to play in ensuring that they are protecting their policy holders and the data that they use for regulatory and compliance reasons.

For the last eight years Acora has worked with Retirement Advantage to enhance the service, resulting in some very well defined and documented processes in place for business continuity testing and recovery, and these are very much dependent on the technology sectors of both organisations in the partnership.

Third line support/outsource

Acora also provides technical support around Retirement Advantage's server environment, server infrastructure, storage infrastructure and some elements of their network security infrastructure and VDi environment. The day-to-day running of user support is carried out by their internal team and Acora provides third line specialist support to that team should they be unable to resolve any issues. For example, if they couldn't solve an issue with their exchange infrastructure internally they could arrange a call with Acora for specialist third line technical support.

As part of their future plans, Retirement Advantage are developing a new product range that will drive demand for additional infrastructure and the IT team has been in talks with Acora around migration of their current infrastructure out of their Worthing office and in to some form of colo/hosting type environment.

Advisory services

Acora's advisory team recently carried out a maturity assessment of Retirement Advantage's current service offerings provided by their internal team to identify some of the target areas they needed to develop. As a smaller organisation Retirement Advantage has not necessarily adopted some of the ITIL standards in the way larger organisations do. The work delivered by the Acora advisory team has enabled them to gather more information to inform a future hybrid outsource agreement that delivers more ITIL based services.

Outcomes

Over the years Retirement Advantage and Acora have enjoyed a long working relationship, overcoming a number of challanges in the process and ultimately resulting in the following benefits:

- **Acess to a wider skill-set** - Retirement Advantage is a relatively small organisation. Knowing that they can easily access, when needed, a wider range of specialist skills and knowledge is reassuring.
- **Compliance** - As a financial services company, Acora's accreditations around security standards and service standards are extremely important to Retirement Advantage and fundamental to their supplier relationship. Without them, they would be tasked with a lot more work in terms of due diligence and validation.
- **Service maturity** - over the past few years Andy has seen Acora grow, evolve and mature in terms of the professional approach it takes to how it provides its service.
- **Effective account management** – the good collaborative relationship between Acora and Retirement Advantage's IT team means problems and issues that come up are resolved quickly.

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