A platform for success
Using an office move to implement real IT improvements

acora
The Choice of Leaders

Customer challenge

- Merger of 3 organisations
- Physical office moves
- Doubling of user-base

Plan-Net solution

- IT migrations & upgrades
- Microsoft Exchange work
- Project management services

Benefits

- Newly merged office environment delivered on-time and in budget
- Unified IT platform ready to scale with organisational growth

Granta Magazine was founded in 1889 by students at Cambridge University and has gone on to feature many of the world's finest writers, evolving over the years into a leading voice in the world of new writing. wwww.granta.com

The scenario

The business behind the magazine, Granta Publications, engaged Plan-Net to assist with the move from its home in a warehouse conversion in Islington to a new facility in Addison Avenue, which it would go on to share with sister companies Portobello Books and Portobello Pictures.

Mark Williams, IT Manager at Granta, would be taking care of all three companies in residence at Addison Avenue, doubling his userbase in the process. With this in mind Granta called on Plan-Net to coordinate the move into their new home, upgrading and standardising technology across the three organisations in the process to create an environment where the increased userbase didn't significantly increase the workload.

The solution

Granta needed to vacate their Islington office three months before their new home would be ready, meaning they would have to seek temporary accommodation for a short period.

Plan-Net identified that this could be turned to Granta's advantage by implementing the new technologies the business required in two stages over the two moves – lessening the pressures of a large scale migration.

In order to squeeze the maximum value out of the interim move, the first phase of the IT migration moved Granta onto the technology platform that would be eventually be used by all parties. Plan-Net were careful to ensure the double move nature of the project did not have an adverse effect on the business, as Williams explains;

"Our office move was complicated by the fact that the lease on our old building expired before the new site was ready. Plan-Net helped identify appropriate office space and planned an interim solution which meant the business was able to continue operations without a single hour's downtime." (continued overleaf)

GRANTA

New home

While Granta's staff were happily installed in their temporary home, Addison Avenue was being rebuilt and refurbished to provide them with a state-of-the-art workplace.

This gave Plan-Net the opportunity to become involved at an early stage, something which Adrian Polley, Technical Director at Plan-Net and leader of the project, views as an essential part of its success.

"Being involved from the very beginning meant we could lay the building blocks of the entire project. We designed the computer room, created plans for structured cabling, managed technical services with other companies to ensure we created the most efficient and convenient set-up possible."

Polley would be the first to admit however that this came with added pressures.

"The nature of the premises meant there was no opportunity for drastic structural change once the initial installations had been completed. This put everyone involved in the project, under a significant amount of pressure to get it right first time."

Plan-Net recognised that the move could be the last opportunity for some time to implement standards that would allow the IT Team to cope with the doubling in workload they were about to experience. The solution did not disappoint, according to Williams;

"Our userbase doubled following the move and our existing network was poorly designed and creaking under the strain. Plan-Net quickly understood how our business works and how best to deliver a network setup that would be sound, secure and manageable. Plan-Net's expertise in designing and implementing the new infrastructure was invaluable."

Granta's IT had grown organically in the years leading up to the move and this had led to issues with reliability and a lack of uniformity. With the planned increase in userbase, and an ambition to become increasingly sophisticated in the delivery of IT at Addison Avenue, those challenges would have to be overcome.

Get connected

Plan-Net increased the reliability and made support significantly easier by implementing standards across the system. This included both PCs and Macs as, in common with much of the publishing industry, Granta's users were split between the two. Granta now had a solid framework to build on, improving everything from network connectivity to security as Adrian Polley explains;

"We decided to completely standardise, meaning that one desktop image could be deployed to all machines. We knew this would make ongoing support significantly easier at Addison Avenue and would lead to savings in the future that far outweighed the initial extra cost."

Granta did not have a management system in place prior to the move, giving Plan-Net the opportunity to define the solution best suited to their client's needs and implement from scratch. Microsoft System Center Essentials was installed to fulfil Granta's system management needs while Mail Marshall Anti-Spam email content security removed 90% of the firm's spam immediately on introduction.

In common with most publishing houses Granta staff work with large, high resolution files. Recognising this Plan-Net set them up with Gigabit Ethernet to each.

With many staff working to tight deadlines and under pressure, remote access was another addition to Granta's IT set-up that provoked a very favourable reaction from the userbase. Plan-Net used Citrix Access Gateway to provide a more flexible, agile

working environment allowing secure access to Granta's systems from outside the office via a 2 factor authentication with Safeword tokens.

The verdict

The nature of the project, along with the progressive and insightful approach taken by both Plan-Net and Granta meant that, rather than being a necessary evil, the move was used as a tool to improve IT for all three businesses. The new technology in place means Mark Williams is equipped to deal with the demands of the successful, growing organisation – now and in the future.

Our environment improved immeasurably following the move due in no small part to Plan-Net's project management.

Mark Williams – IT Manager, Granta Publications

Acora and Plan-Net join forces

In 2019 Acora announced the completion of our merger with Plan-Net. This created a group with over 300 employees, 4 offices and 300 customers, focused on delivering outstanding customer experience to businesses across the UK. The group is underpinned by great people, strong technical innovation and a combined desire to grow.

This Plan-Net case study is an example of the great work the team have delivered and the combined capabilities of the new group.

If you would like to talk to us about any of our services, you can contact us via phone, email or through our website. Our team will be happy to help.

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