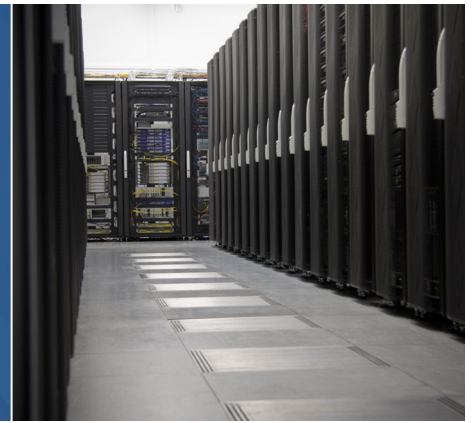


Case Study / Cestria Housing: Total Outsourcing Project



Cestria Community Housing Association Ltd (CCHA) is a not-for-profit, independently registered Social Landlord which took over the ownership and management of Chester-le-Street's District Councils housing stock in early 2008 after tenants voted resoundingly for change.

On becoming independent from the council, Cestria became fully responsible for its own ICT provision. The company was presented with the choice of using the councils existing ICT infrastructure to host and manage Cestria's systems, or to build and manage them independently.

Cestria chief executive, Ian Broughton, explains: "We considered using the council's existing resources, but our needs were far more challenging and we felt that a completely new approach was needed."

After reviewing their current and future requirements and taking into consideration the associated costs of managing and maintaining their own systems, a decision was made to outsource and find an end-to-end technology partner to work with. Cestria's aim was to find a single supplier to implement and support their entire ICT infrastructure with a single point of contact for service delivery and all I.T. related issues. It was important to Cestria that the supplier had the correct experience and offered best value.

Any chosen solution needed to be future-proofed & flexible enough to see the company through their first 5 years as an independent business. It also had to accommodate Cestria's multiple application environment which included finance, HR, estates management and maintenance.

Another major consideration was reliability and security. Cestria offer a 24/7 help line service for their residents which features PNC monitoring, including logging and support via 3rd party software systems. It was essential that this software is accessible at all times; therefore a fault tolerant connection with guaranteed up-times had to be in place.

Data security was also an important consideration as HR, financial and tenancy records formed part of the core business data.

Why Knowledge

After an open tender bidding process, Cestria selected Knowledge to install and manage their new server infrastructure, high-speed communications links and data security requirements. Ian Broughton explains one of the key reasons why Knowledge won the contract: "Knowledge offered an extremely cost-effective solution that will not only meet our current requirements but has the in-built flexibility to accommodate the introduction of new services."

Project Overview

Company: Cestria Housing
Project: Total Outsourcing Project
Web: www.cestria.org

Data Services:

- Ethernet
- Internet Bandwidth Services
- Remote Access Services

I.T. Solutions:

- Server Infrastructure
- Data Services
- Virtualisation

Data Centre Services:

- Equipment co-location
- Managed co-location

Managed Services:

- Communications
- Infrastructure
- Support Services

Another major factor in the selection process was that Knowledge was able to offer the use of their new state of the art Data Centre in North Tyneside. With physical, electronic and biometric systems - conforming to ISO27001 for information security, the centre provides maximum protection for stored data. This coupled with an HP Blade infrastructure to ensure high-speed data transfer, offered the 99.99% ICT service availability that Cestria needed.

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The Solution

Knowledge's core solution for Cestria was based around Virtualisation technology. Cestria didn't want any hardware on-site beyond their PC's & laptops for office based and mobile workers. Using the Virtualisation model, all data is stored and managed centrally at Knowledge's Data Centre and is accessed remotely by Cestria's workers. The benefits of hosting at Knowledge's data centre includes: 24/7 data integrity, off-line back up and 25% cost savings to the client due to the core hardware being located in a low carbon footprint, energy efficient facility.

Knowledge designed the whole system so that it can quickly and easily accommodate planned new services coming in over the next few months. These are expected to include a facility to enable tenants to access and review their accounts on-line via a secure internet link, and new software that allows people to work out how much their energy bills will be before they move in.

The project includes the provision of new software, hardware and disaster recovery, as well as technical support and 24-hour help desk services. Another key element of the project was an easy-to-use but secure interface device, which enables authorised personnel to access Cestria's database.

Summary

George Sanger, Knowledge's sales and marketing director, said "Cestria takes the firm into a new area of the public sector where it will be targeting other similar opportunities."

"We offered a solution that provided major cost savings and best value together with innovative solutions to solve their business issues."

"Knowledge offered an extremely cost-effective solution that will not only meet our current requirements but has the in-built flexibility to accommodate the introduction of new services."

Ian Broughton, Cestria



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