

Case Study / North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority



North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority receives approximately 19,000 emergency calls each year, resulting in over 9,000 incidents. A percentage of these are “Special Service” calls, incidents which do not necessarily involve fire, but require the skills and equipment which the Authority has built up over the years attending road traffic accidents, rail disasters and people trapped in machinery and floods.

It is, therefore, vital that the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority maintains its standards of efficiency and continually strives for operational improvement. An elaborate I.T. network is essential to provide quality support to the front line services. Billy Rock, Head of ICT explains. “We are working to provide a service where one hundred percent of all capable transactions are provided electronically. This will enable a performance led culture, ensuring high quality management information at every one of our 41 locations”. The Authority’s back office was outdated and presented frequent problems, mainly due to ageing hardware and software. This caused concerns regarding reliability and availability. A risk analysis indicated the need to replace the systems with a modern, industry standard, architecture. The business need was the availability of systems to all users. The business requirement was an industry standard, resilient, modern and flexible environment.

Knowledge I.T. were one of a number of prospective solutions providers asked to submit a full quotation for the project. They had originally visited the Authority to discuss business continuity solutions and it was during this meeting that the Authority became aware of their apparent expertise in the field of systems migration. As part of the bidding process, Knowledge I.T, a Microsoft Gold Partner, began with a detailed review of the Authority’s pre-commissioned infrastructure design report. Mike Warren, Knowledge IT’s lead consultant, explains. “This was a key step in the process, allowing us to examine the project objectives and to substantiate our bid to become one of

the Authority’s main ICT partners. Our detailed technical evaluation showed that an integrated solution based upon Microsoft products was the best fit for the Authority’s requirements”. Rock continued. “After an exhaustive analysis of the submitted quotations, Knowledge I.T. showed themselves to be professional, competent and obviously very capable of handling and delivering a project of this magnitude. Their willingness to co-operate by providing additional information during the selection process provided further evidence of their potential”.

Wayne Dyson, Knowledge I.T’s Leeds Office Account Manager added “Our approach helped secure the prestigious contract in the face of intense competition from both national and local I.T. companies”. The Authority’s ICT team had already identified the need to migrate from the Novell 5.2 directory service and Groupwise 5.5 e-mail system to Windows 2003 Active Directory and Exchange 2003. Knowledge I.T. recommended a nine phase project to achieve the proposed solution, commencing with the creation of a Windows 2003 Active Directory Forest using the new forest name of northyorksfire.gov.uk. In addition, the existing HP MSA 500 SAN was upgraded to an MSA 1000 along with the introduction of a centralised back up solution utilising HP StorageWorks MSL devices.

Project Overview

Company: NY Fire & Rescue Authority
Project: Remote Workforce Integration
Web: www.northyorksfire.gov.uk

Solution:

- Ethernet
- Internet Bandwidth Services
- Remote Access Services

Benefits:

- Updated systems resulting in better efficiency sitewide
- Easier to support industry standard I.T. Systems

The phased approach allowed the smooth migration of the services across to the new Active Directory. A number of test accounts were created on the existing Novell NDS and Groupwise systems in order to check that the migration procedure was working correctly. Once it was proven that these test accounts could be migrated into Windows 2003 Active Directory successfully and that e-mail flow had been verified between the domains from both external and internal sources, a number of the Authority's I.T. staff accounts were migrated.

"A variety of users and workstations at Brigade Headquarters were migrated into the new system. With the information acquired during the test migrations, a set of documents was created that outlined the migration of users, clients and data. This documentation allowed the Authority's I.T. staff to complete the transfer of the remaining users unaided", says Warren A new Citrix XPA Farm was created in the northyorksfire.gov.uk forest using the latest version of Citrix Presentation Server 4.0. This particular version of Citrix has built-in improvements that allow a Citrix Farm to span across all WAN locations. The farm is accessed by users at remote locations to gain access to the resources located at Brigade Headquarters.

Exchange Server 2003 and Windows Server 2003 combine to provide the highest levels of performance, security, reliability and ease of management. Kyle Whittle, Development and Support Technician, explains. "Creating and managing mailboxes is much easier where changes are managed by simply updating attributes to Active Directory. The compression and caching built into the new solution has improved e-mail speeds. Windows 2003 server has an excellent administrative model and has reduced the time taken for routine support tasks. As a result the ICT team are achieving consistency with much less effort".

Talking about the resources from Knowledge I.T, Rock said "Knowledge I.T. assigned a technical specialist, who, often staying after normal working hours, assisted our technical staff with problems that, although related, were outside the main scope of the project. Also, the Authority's allocated account manager was and is always on hand to advise and facilitate, forging the essential link between the Authority and Knowledge I.T.. "The technical staff provided by Knowledge I.T. all showed exceptional ability and commitment in support of the Authority's objectives. This testament is further borne out by the desire of the Authority's technical staff not directly involved with the project to engage Knowledge I.T. in further developments. "A critical part of the project was to ensure we had software and hardware support contracts in place. Knowledge's approach was excellent, with the handover from the project implementation team to Support being seamless. It's almost like having Knowledge I.T. Support as a remote extension to our ICT team.

"In having an industry standard foundation on which to build, the Authority is in a strong position to move forward with plans to further enhance the infrastructure in pursuit of sustained efficiency, thus providing a future-proofed platform to deliver a first class service to the citizens of North Yorkshire and the City of York".

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