

Case Study / Stockton Borough Council



Stockton Council is one of the UK's top performing local authorities, earning an "Excellent" classification in the annual nationwide Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the second successive year.

Stockton Council has achieved major success in being named by the Government as a Beacon Council for the fifth consecutive year. Stockton Council is a Unitary Authority that provides an extensive range of services for over 182,000 people in the area, providing services for: Development and Regeneration, Education Leisure & Cultural Services, Health & Social Care, Resources, Service Stockton, Law & Democracy, Policy, Performance & Communications.

Tony Shuttleworth, Production Services Manager, explains: "The council's network consists of over a hundred separate sites spread across the borough, the sites range from one or two users up to five or six hundred users. Our decision to upgrade the current infrastructure also provided the opportunity to consolidate disparate systems underpinning the council's strategic commitment for improving and expanding the ICT services".

The migration to Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and Exchange Server 2003 platform was critical to the Council's ICT future service delivery. The restructuring of the network was necessary to improve network security, performance and reliability whilst allowing the consolidation of data across the councils multiple business systems to improve both customer access and service delivery.

"We used the window of opportunity brought about by the upgrade to review how we could improve the efficiency and performance of our network whilst streamlining our systems to improve the administration and manageability of the network" confirms Shuttleworth.

"A critical success factor in such a large complex project was selecting the right partner. We chose Knowledge I.T. because they demonstrated a total understanding of our business objectives and requirements, their excellent technical expertise within the consultant and engineering teams, also as a Microsoft Gold Partner they had the credentials we were looking for".

The deployment of Windows Server 2003 allowed specific server roles to be defined and routine server management tasks to be implemented allowing administrators to take full advantage of the new and improved features within Windows 2003 and Active Directory when managing their extensive server infrastructure.

Although the council was piloting high speed VPN access via leased and ADSL technologies the majority of users were still using slow analogue dial-up connections. With high performance remote access being a necessity the council used the migration to Exchange 2003 as an opportunity to improve external access to their e-mail systems. As part of this project users now have Outlook Web Access and Outlook Mobile Access, which provides a secure mail connection and improved network performance from any location and any device.

Project Overview

Company: Stockton Borough Council
Project: Remote Workforce Integration
Web: www.stockton.gov.uk

Solution:

- Migrated Microsoft
- SAN
- Hardware & Software Support

Benefits:

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

The introduction of a SAN to improve the utilisation of data storage within the council, allowed them to introduce high availability solutions for key business areas as some applications and data were so critical to business operations that any downtime is unacceptable. Slow recovery from planned or unplanned downtime can have serious consequences, including lost revenue or adverse publicity. Legato Co-Standby ensured that data and applications were available and accessible 24x7 by monitoring applications, data, and services, and by providing reliable restart or failover, this together with a prudent choice of hardware provided the council with zero data loss and application high-availability.

The migration to Microsoft Windows 2003 included the deployment of Active Directory (AD), providing single-logon capability and a central repository for information for the entire infrastructure, vastly simplifying user and computer management and providing superior access to networked resources. The ICT team required simplification of management tasks, strengthening of network security and overall use of existing systems through interoperability.

Stockton Council have increased security with the introduction of Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) which provides advanced protection, ease of use, and fast secure access for remote users using outlook web access. Remote users are provided with a better and more efficient user experience. With a unified messaging system and data consolidation across the council's multiple sites the users are experiencing improved network performance and reliability with added security

"We are very impressed that Knowledge carried out the migration with minimum disruption and as far as possible the migration was transparent to most users. The challenges of a migration this size involving network upgrades and data consolidation across multiple sites was planned extremely well. We are very impressed by project management and technical skills Knowledge I.T. have demonstrated throughout the entire project", confirms Shuttleworth. The ICT team recognise the advantages and gains they can achieve by the implementation of Active Directory Group Policies. The ability to centrally control the configuration and installation of software on the council's workstations will provide substantial benefits to the ICT team".

As a key part of the project plan, Chris Gaughan the Knowledge I.T. lead consultant provided a series of skills transfer courses for the Councils ICT team. "This course was pitched at the right level; my team now have the skills and confidence to manage the new systems. I couldn't ask for more states Kevin Carey Desktop Support Team Leader".

With our migration to Windows Server 2003 complete, we are now in a position to review and upgrade some of our business applications. We are currently reviewing Mobility for our home users and evaluating Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server.

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See how Knowledge I.T. can benefit your organisation
by calling today on: 0845 898 9080

KNOWLEDGE I.T

Head Office North East: New Century House. Crowther Road, Washington. NE38 0AQ

Yorkshire & East Midlands Office: Viscount Court, Leeds Road. Rothwell, Leeds. LS26 0GR

Telephone: 0845 142 0020 Fax: 0845 142 0021

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