CN IT SOLUTIONS & HERBERT TODD & SON ELECTRICAL RETAILERS

IT implementation case study v.1

Herbert Todd's experience of working with CN IT Solutions, including the successful implementation of appropriate IT solutions to aid their business.

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CN IT Solutions

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Customer profile

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Phone number	01904 628676
Fax number	N/A
Web site address	http://www.htodd.co.uk/

Industry	Dealer in electrical appliances and contracting services.
Number of employees	
Annual revenue	

Contact name	Matthew Todd
Title	
Phone number	01904 628676
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1. CN IT SOLUTIONS - COMPANY DESCRIPTION

CN IT Solutions provides a professional service in and around the York area to small and medium sized businesses, based on our 4 core services; IT Management, IT Support, IT Consultancy and IT Procurement.

CN IT offer a proactive service that aims to manage the IT needs of the SME sector, in order that clients can truly benefit through lowered costs and a return on their IT investment. CN IT aims to shape the IT services they provide to meet business specific requirements. CN IT also advises on upgrades, security, licensing, data-backup and disaster recovery.

All the IT Managers at CN IT are Certified System Administrators and Engineers on Windows, Linux and UNIX platforms, with additional specialisations on Cisco, Citrix and SQL Database technologies.

2. HERBERT TODD – COMPANY DESCRIPTION

Herbert Todd & Son established 1936 are a reliable family firm that deals in electrical appliances offering retail, rental, and repair and contracting services.

With a long history of providing the highest quality appliances from Panasonic, Sony, Bosch, Siemens and Hoover for sale or rent, along with a service pledge to match.

Herbert Todd and Son also have trained electrical installation engineers to NICEIC (National Inspection Council of Electrical Installation Contractors) standard.

3. HERBERT TODD - IT POSITION

Herbert Todd's contacted CN IT Solutions in November 2010 to address a number of IT issues. They had 12 PC's in the head office and the 2 PC's in the Acomb office.

These PC's were working as part of a large workgroup with no network standardisation in place. Employees all accessed a Windows XP computer that acted as a file server and held the business critical retail database, NCompass from Calculus Software Solutions.

Email was hosted by the web providers on a standard POP3 account, this meant there was little protection against email attachment viruses and because messages were downloaded on to the accessing email computer, users always needed to use the same machines to access the emails. It also meant in the event of a computer breaking down there would be no access to historical emails received or sent for the affected user.

All employees were also all using administrator accounts meaning all users were able to change security settings and install software. Matt was finding this type of set up increasing difficult to control and maintain.

Another issue for Herbert Todd's was that the NCompass software database that ran all of their business critical systems was running extremely slowly and affecting day to day operations.

CN IT Solutions was tasked with two main objectives –

> ➢ **Creating a more stable IT environment for the business.**
> ➢ **Increase the effectiveness of the current IT operations.**

4.   **PROPOSED TECHNICAL SOLUTION**

CN IT solutions were able to test and analyse the existing IT setup at Herbert Todd's by using the latest Virtualisation technology to determine whether upgrading the current infrastructure would have the desired performance improvements.

Upon completion CN IT was able to conclude that the business would certainly benefit from upgrading their current hardware, and could also secure and improve the overall IT usage within the company. Given the other IT issues that needed to be addressed the following solution was proposed -

Install a HP ML330 server to run the retail database software on - HP Proliant Servers have long been the industry standard servers on which CN IT build their solutions, based on the rock solid reliability and the enterprise performance of the servers. With the ability to tailor the system specifications they are the ideal cost effective solution. Hosting the SQL Server database on a server with a dedicated RAID card and 15K RPM enterprise class SAS disks ensured the server would continue to perform optimally over time as the database continued to grow.

Install a HP ML350 server as a VMware hypervisor to host virtual machines; specifically Microsoft Small Business Server 2008 (SBS 2008) and a Linux email gateway server - Using this combination allowed Herbert Todd's the additional benefit of hosting their email internally using the Microsoft Exchange server included in SBS 2008, and implementing a robust, secure mail gateway to ensure that any unwanted or dangerous emails are prevented from entering the network.

Change the network configuration from Workgroup to Active Directory Domain - CN IT was able to take advantage of the new server installations and implement a new Active Directory domain. This allowed the network resources to be secured, network administration to be simplified, and resiliency and disaster recovery to be improved. Securing data and network resources is

paramount in any organization, but even more so when financial records of customers are held. CN IT was able to implement security policies that were sufficiently secure, yet also practicably maintainable without placing an unnecessary burden on the network users.

With the new Active Directory Domain, the desktop computers and user accounts could be standardized. This ensured the network could be monitored and efficiently maintained as new vulnerabilities could be detected early and security updates automatically deployed.

CN IT was also able to offer Herbert Todd's further savings with their knowledge of Microsoft Licensing programs. CN IT made use of the Microsoft Open Value license to purchase the Small Business Server with the Premium Add On pack which not only saved Herbert Todd's £900 but also entitled them to make use of an additional Windows Server License and the SQL Server license to run the retail database, saving an additional £3000.

5. PRODUCTS AND SERVICES CN IT SOLUTIONS USED

New HP 625 Business Notebook
New HP 3125 Business Desktop
AVG Internet Security
HP ML 330 Proliant Server
HP ML 350 Proliant Server
Microsoft Small Business Server 2008 Premium
VMware vSphere
Microsoft SQL Server Standard

6. IMPLEMENTATION

CN IT detailed an IT migration plan that originally took place over 2 weeks (plus support for 2-3 days after switch over), however there were issues with the software database and whilst they were not in the scope of the original project they did affect the overall timescale in which the plan was implemented. The migration plan took into consideration the changes that the staff would need to adjust to. A naming convention was used that would make use of the existing email addresses and user account details in a way that was familiar to the staff. Onsite training and assistance was provided so that staff could quickly get to grips with the new system.

The migration plan segmented the network into sections that could be migrated overnight so that the staff could continue their work with minimal disruption and without any user intervention. This provided the opportunity to include roll back plans so that original configurations could be restored quickly should problems arise.

Overall, the migration plan was designed and implemented so that there would be few changes to the way staff worked, thereby allowing them to adjust quickly to the new system whilst transparently implementing major changes to the back office systems.

7. TIMESCALES/COST

Approximately £8,500

8. BENEFITS

With the new IT systems in place, Herbert Todd and Son were able to take advantage of the following benefits:

- The ability for remote working with access to company email and remote desktops from any external location
- Complete standerdisation of the IT infrastructure allowing for reduced administration costs and easier system management
- Stable IT environment with minimal disruption
- Faster systems
- Increased mobility
- Improved security
- Increased access and sharing of users accounts and documents in a secure and controlled way so that only users with the appropriate permissions could access resources
- Documents saved centrally, reducing the complexity to manage documents stored on multiple machines.
- Simplified system backups of virtual machines and physical servers
- Disaster recovery plan
- A single point of contact for all IT related issues with defined SLA's for continued service delivery

9. CUSTOMER COMMENT

Statement from Matthew Todd –

 "I have found CNIT a very easy firm to deal with, bridging the gap between real world issues and technical IT implementation in a professional and cost effective manner. Before I instructed CNIT I maintained our systems myself but

as the company grew this became more and more time consuming. Outsourcing the skills to deal with the initial upgrade process and on-going support has allowed to me to concentrate on the day to day running of my business and its continued drive to expand and help more customers in their search for help with electrical products and services."

10.   EVALUATION

CN IT Solutions were able to confidently suggest and subsequently implement an appropriate cost effective solution for Herbett Todd. Installing quality products, using a detailed migration plan ensured a seamless upgrade to their IT systems.

11.   REFERENCES

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