

CASE STUDY

BRANDON TRUST UNLOCKS NEW FLEXIBILITY THROUGH THE CLOUD



OVERVIEW

- Brandon Trust wanted to modernise its dated legacy infrastructure to provide the efficiency and flexibility required by its mobile workforce.
- CDW began working with Brandon Trust in 2014, introducing a three-year lease model to ensure that employees had access to the latest devices.
- The existing outdated data centre was migrated to Microsoft Azure, providing reliable remote access to essential information.
- Microsoft Surface devices and the move to the cloud, combined with CDW's comprehensive customer support, improved productivity, flexibility and uptime. This enabled Brandon Trust to run more efficiently and empowered its employees to optimise the time they spent supporting clients.

ABOUT BRANDON TRUST

- Brandon Trust is a charity providing a wide range of support services for adults and children with learning disabilities and autism across the South of England.
- Brandon Trust's aim is to help people live life the way they choose through high quality, individualised support ranging from planned day trips to 24/7 care.
- It supports around 1,600 people and has approximately 2,000 employees, the majority of whom are mobile support workers.
- Brandon Trust's head office in Bristol is supported by a network of connected offices across the country.

CHALLENGE

At the heart of the high quality support provided by Brandon Trust are its employees, especially the field workers who provide specialised, personal support, many of whom are required to be highly mobile as part of their job. Previously, these workers carried ageing laptops running on Windows XP in order to access information on their clients, complete required administrative tasks and book activities online. Carrying out routine tasks was cumbersome and significantly slowed the workers down, resulting in excess administration time and slow processing, all of which took valuable time away from client contact. The office-based workers encountered similar problems with their legacy desktop computers. Collaboration between field and office workers was difficult as all information had to be saved locally on their devices and files could not be accessed remotely.

The old server farm was another challenge. All critical operations depended on it, but the dated infrastructure left the system vulnerable to disruption from power cuts and other incidents. According to Richard Burgin, Head of Information Services at Brandon Trust, power cuts were a regular problem in the building, sometimes occurring several times a month. "Employees would regularly lose access to critical information for up to half a day at a time. The whole IT infrastructure was risk prone and people avoided relying on it," says Richard.

Cost efficiency was also an issue. Brandon Trust has to optimise their resources to maximise the level of support its clients receive. The time and effort employees spent trying to carry out work using old devices was proving counterproductive. "Our support workers have a certain amount of time set aside for administration tasks, but fitting the time in that bracket was a struggle as sometimes simply powering up the laptop would take a long time," explains Richard. In addition, the file server itself was costing money every second, yet not providing the flexibility, reliability or efficiency the growing organisation required.

These issues conflicted with Brandon Trust's five-year development strategy, which outlined a future where "the workforce has what they need to do a great job and experience wellbeing at work".

SOLUTION

To address infrastructure challenges, CDW suggested migrating the server room to Microsoft Azure to provide Brandon Trust with a reliable and scalable set of cloud services available via a flexible cost model. The migration has improved accessibility, optimised uptime and future proofed the operation against damage from power cuts and other disruptions.

To tackle the challenge of the legacy devices, CDW introduced a cost-effective lease model. Employees are now equipped with Microsoft Surface devices, which are refreshed every three years. This opex model enables Brandon Trust to benefit from the latest technology without a large upfront investment. To unleash the full functionality of the new devices, CDW helped the organisation upgrade its operating system from Windows XP. In a period of 18 months, CDW oversaw a rapid development from Windows 7 to Windows 10.

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– Richard Burgin, Head of Information Services



A key part of the new solution is the Microsoft Office 365 product suite. When designing the upgrade from the legacy IT estate, CDW suggested a Microsoft-centric solution, because its cost-efficiency and versatility made it ideally suited to support Brandon Trust's requirements throughout, and after, the modernisation process.

As the Office 365 E2 package was available free of charge for non-profit organisations, Brandon Trust achieved significant savings from the start and has since upgraded to E3 licenses to enable more than 650 mobile device users to exploit the full features of the software suite. Office 365

was essential in transforming the way employees worked, introducing flexibility and improved internal communication – for example, through the Skype for Business app – and providing a new level of accessibility for field support workers. The tools provided in Office 365, including SharePoint as a content management system, also simplify daily administration tasks.

Employees can now securely fill in forms and send information electronically on the spot, whereas previously they relied on printed documents which were completed by hand and scanned to create electronic records.

OUTCOME

The modernisation project was an essential step for Brandon Trust towards a more agile model of working. Thanks to CDW, the organisation now has an IT infrastructure that is capable of supporting its day-to-day needs, and employees see IT as an enabler, not a hindrance.

By providing cloud migration services and support, CDW helped Brandon Trust move closer to its ideal model of working where documents don't need to be stored locally or duplicated, but instead are available on demand. “Cost wise, the cloud is fantastic and we have achieved uptime of 99.9 percent. It really changes the way we work, allowing people to unlock a new level of flexibility,” says Richard.

Abandoning legacy hardware for a lease based replacement cycle ensures that employees always have access to up-to-date devices. Their feedback identifies the introduction of the Surface Pros and the upgrade to the Windows 10 operating system as the most beneficial changes in the organisation in recent years. The teams are now using the camera capabilities of their new devices to capture content and the associated digital pen to sketch out ideas and notes in real time.

“This is a new landscape for us. The old machines looked good on paper, as they didn't cost a lot, but we did not get anything out of them. Now we think of the lease model as a

consumption model: if we break a three-year lease by day, what is the relation of the cost and the value gained? We can clearly see the benefit in the time and effort employees save actually doing the job and having a device that allows work to be accomplished. This far outweighs the perceived cost of switching to the lease model,” says Richard.

CDW provides support services to ensure that employees get the most out of their devices. The support structure, where employees can contact the dedicated help desk directly, has been met with praise.

As a next step, the organisation is looking to decommission the old file server and replace it with a SharePoint document library running on Office 365 to allow more efficient management of information in line with new European legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

“CDW excels in the way it delivers services,” says Richard. “If there is a problem, CDW is always very quick in making things right again and the account management team is very invested in what we are trying to achieve. Working with CDW, you can really see what they bring to the table.”

CDW Account Director, Phat To, says: “It has been our privilege to work with Brandon Trust on a project that will genuinely improve the way in which they support individuals.”

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– Richard Burgin, Head of Information Services

For more information or to discuss your requirements, speak to CDW:

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