CASE STUDY

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP AND HYBRID CLOUD TECHNOLOGY ENABLES PHOTOBOX TO RAMP UP PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES.

OVERVIEW

- Photobox needed to update and rationalise its ageing IT infrastructure while streamlining its 100+ suppliers across Europe

- The organisation wanted to build deep ongoing partnerships with a few trusted suppliers

- Photobox wanted to address compute and storage capabilities together — including storage issues which were constraining order fulfilment at periods of peak demand

- The project also had to facilitate a data centre move in Germany and system preparation to enable a divestment — all during COVID-19 lockdowns across Europe

ABOUT PHOTOBOX

- Photobox Group is an online photo printing company operating in over ten countries

- The European market leader in photo printing and the production of personalised photo products — such as wall art, calendars, mugs, phone cases and photo books — Photobox served its first customers in 2000

- Every year, millions of people select, configure and order Photobox products online

- Factories in the UK and mainland Europe create bespoke products, printing on state-of-the-art machines

CHALLENGE

Since it was founded in the UK in 2000, Photobox has grown rapidly. The organisation has expanded into 10+ countries across Europe through natural growth, mergers and acquisitions, resulting in a diverse and ageing IT infrastructure spread across facilities in the UK & mainland Europe.

The IT infrastructure was coming to the end of its serviceable life, and support agreements were ending.

Photobox's estate is a blend of on-premises and cloud. Its business model allows customers to customise online, then the resulting data is brought on-premises to feed factory printers and cutters to fulfil orders. However, photo books require large print files, and storage was becoming an increasing bottleneck, holding back the potential of production equipment to run to capacity. This resulted in missed business targets and intense pressure being placed on the IT team during periods of high customer demand.

The organisation needed to upgrade its infrastructure and migrate business applications such as its SAP ERP to the new environment — all without any system downtime that might impact operations. Further complications included the need to separate systems and data to enable a divestment, and in Germany, Photobox was on notice to vacate its rented data centre.

SOLUTION

CDW worked closely with Photobox to understand its challenges and utilising our expert knowledge and vendor partner relationships, proposed a technology solution that would meet the organisation's specific compute and storage needs — all within its constraints.

PHOTOBOX

NetApp
Global Star Partner

CDW
PEOPLE WHO GET IT

CDW, in partnership with NetApp, collaborated on a solution design standardising on NetApp hybrid cloud technology with a 2-phase project including:

· Storage and compute across 3 sites
· E2812 backup target
· Veeam licensing

In June 2020, during COVID-19 lockdowns, CDW and NetApp provided remote setup to replace Photobox's ageing hardware with the new solution in the UK, France and Germany. John Thompson, Director of Technical Operations UK & Germany at Photobox explained, "The technology was delivered, racked, stacked and powered collaboratively by our teams. It took less than 48 hours to get each location ready before migrating data." This success led to further expansion in September to increase the footprints in France and Germany.

"The technology refresh was completed in less than six weeks by our UK and French teams with zero downtime." said John Thompson,"We envisaged the work in Germany would take three months, plus another three months to migrate

our SAP ERP and associated systems. Actually, 12 weeks after starting the project, the production systems in Germany were migrated and, two weeks later, the ERP and associated systems followed, with no perceived downtime to the business."

CDW took the lead in co-ordinating when the technology would be delivered and scheduled resource for the installations. In addition, our National Distribution Centre (NDC) proved to be an enormous asset in the project. The NDC's international shipment capabilities provided coverage for all Photobox's facilities across Europe, and our international logistics expertise meant everyone was updated with lead times, shipment dates and order tracking details.

The more modern environment provided by NetApp and CDW led to vastly improved performance. Photobox in

Paris can process 185% more items on the NetApp hybrid cloud solution than the environment it replaced. In addition, the new compute nodes provide 30% headroom for spare capacity to support future growth.

"We were able to add 50% additional storage within 14 hours — on traditional kit that would have typically been a weeks or months-long project," said John Thompson, "So, it was really quite breathtaking how easy it was."

The phased project saw Photobox also migrate its SAP ERP to run in the new environment. Again, this was achieved ahead of schedule.

Additionally, CDW provides additional support via its own Service Desk facility, providing first, second and third line support covering any configuration and hardware issues that Photobox may experience.

OUTCOME

The CDW and NetApp partnership has enabled Photobox to meet its objectives of:

· Standardising on one solution for server and storage infrastructure
· Consolidating the number of IT vendor partners
· Improving systems performance
· Monitoring all systems and performance through a single view
· Capability to prepare systems and data to enable divestments

Photobox's new modern IT infrastructure now creates potential for the business to drive growth and innovation, rather than limit and constrain it.

A key metric for the business is NPS (Net Promoter Score) which measures

customer satisfaction and loyalty. A significant factor in this is delivering a quality service to customers as fast as possible. Now IT constraints have been largely removed, products are being printed and delivered in days rather than weeks. Customer retention and repeat business are also increasing as a result.

Photobox's IT refresh project has also engaged and inspired its IT team across all geographies. Team members have praised the latest versions of leading-edge technologies now being used. This has resulted in a desire to utilise new upgrades in solving problems and driving innovations.

"We have an excellent partnership with CDW and NetApp. We've built a lot of trust together and our partnership continues to flourish, said John

Thompson, "CDW is getting more and more of our business based on that trust."

Lee Hendra, Director of Solutions Sales at CDW said, "At CDW, we aim to build lasting relationships with our customers and partners. We ensured that we listened carefully to the team at Photobox, taking time to understand their requirements fully. Leveraging the expertise of our partners at NetApp as well as our own experience and the power of our National Distribution Centre, we were able to deliver ahead of schedule, ensuring that Photobox's business was able to continue throughout the upgrade, and despite the COVID-19 lockdown."

To learn more about technology solutions by CDW, contact your Account Manager or email customersuccess@uk.cdw.com