



Working closely with NetServices to streamline and integrate operations

The Spicerhaart group achieves their 'forward thinking' strategy with the help of NetServices innovative solutions. Branch offices communicate with one another effectively and acquisitions are integrated into the network with minimum disruption.

Spicerhaart is one of the biggest integrated retail financial services businesses in the UK. The group includes the largest and most successful independent estate agency group in Europe. Since the company's inception in 1989 it has worked to create a one-stop shop for financial and legal services, surveying and estate agency, all underpinned by the use of innovative technology. The group operates through its five brands (haart, Spicer McColl, Felicity J Lord, Darlows and Haybrook) and surveyor offices with over 2,000 employees based in 300 offices across the UK.

Challenges

With a large distributed set-up of branch and partner offices Spicerhaart is harnessing the power of technology to make the process of purchasing more efficient (and less stressful) for vendors, buyers and agents. They required a high performance network which would allow for seamless integration, with flexibility and security guaranteed. This would enable them to maintain the performance levels required for the interactive applications essential to making buying and selling easier.

As a company which is experiencing consistent growth, the network also had to be future-proof. It was essential that the network was easily scalable to facilitate their acquisition strategy. New sites would have to be integrated into their way of working with ease in order to improve the efficiencies of the infrastructure currently in place. Spicerhaart already have a strong presence in the southern half of England and are strengthening their geographical reach to other areas, especially the North. The latest acquisition (November 2007) saw Spicerhaart acquire the Sheffield based Haybrook agency.

In addition Spicerhaart also wanted to include remote workers into the network to facilitate home-working. The home workers would require the same access to applications as they have in any office location, to ensure that home-working was productive for the business, as well as being a benefit to the employees.

CHALLENGES

- Large number of branch and remote offices
- Flexible network required
- Improve efficiency

SOLUTION

- Bespoke network - flexible and upgradeable
- Fully managed service
- Dedicated account and service management

RESULTS

- Consistent good level of service
- Consultative service with close working relationship
- Secure and resilient network improves efficiency

"NetServices extensive portfolio of innovative solutions mean that they add true value to us as a business. The service we receive from them regularly exceeds our expectations, especially when it involves the integration of new or remote sites."

*Russell Auty,
IT Manager, Spicerhaart.*

Solution

Spicerhaart have a bespoke network in place, incorporating various access technologies to provide them with the most efficient and cost-effective solution. Access technologies are chosen dependent on what is most appropriate for each site.

The services provided to Spicerhaart are fully managed, therefore NetServices retain control to ensure maximum availability. This reduces the need for the Spicerhaarts IT Manager to have additional personnel on-site for network management.

All acquisitions and expansions are also handled with ease. The Haybrook agency acquisition resulted in the need for 12 new sites to be incorporated into the network with minimum disruption. From the date of order, NetServices had all new sites live on the network within just 14 working days.

NetServices and Spicerhaart work together continuously to review the infrastructures in place. November 2007 marked the start of an upgrade proposal to enhance the DR site. Previously the DR site was interconnected via leased line technology. NetServices are proposing the installation of a BT Ethernet circuit from NetServices Tele City to the DR site to further increase resilience.

Benefits

The dedicated NetServices Account Director liaises closely with Spicerhaart to continually assess and improve efficiency for their business by providing a consultative service and innovative solutions.

Technically the network in place is fast, efficient, reliable and secure, and therefore appropriate for current and future requirements. It is also upgradeable and ongoing management ensures that the network infrastructure keeps pace with the business.

In addition to the close working relationship which Spicerhaart have with their Account Director they also have premium support from the Service Management team. Our Continuous Service Improvement Programme (CSIP) is administered via a scorecard system. Spicerhaart have acknowledged that the level of service they receive from NetServices is consistently good – and that this level has increased since we took ownership of the account.

Spicerhaart have achieved major success and growth and will continue to do so, with NetServices integrating new sites and incorporating upgrades with minimum disruption.

Future plans

Due to the close relationship that has developed, NetServices are now working with Spicerhaart to ensure their use of technology moves with the times. Areas under review include upgrades to their Disaster Recovery solution in order to provide additional resilience, as well as migration to a more converged network infrastructure. Our business conferencing solution is also being considered as well as a SIP implementation which would allow Spicerhaart to benefit from an IP voice solution whilst still utilising their existing PBX assets.



"Having overseen the Spicerhaart account for a number of years, I understand their business requirements and network and thus can make informed recommendations both from a technical and business perspective, aware of the results they want to achieve."

*Graham Brimage,
Head of Existing Accounts, NetServices.*