

Harvard Engineering Ltd

Engineering firm pursues growth strategy by hosting innovative street lighting solution with Star

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About Harvard Engineering Ltd.

Established in 1993, Harvard Engineering is a world leader in the design, development and manufacture of electronic ballasts and control products for the lighting industry. The company's innovative, multi-award winning solution "LeafNut" is a revolutionary wireless remote monitoring system for street lighting and uses leading-edge technology to cut carbon emissions and reduce pollution.

A new way of lighting the UK's streets

Harvard Engineering currently works with more than 30 local councils throughout the UK, including Hertfordshire, Blackpool, Luton, Suffolk and Westminster. The LeafNut remote monitoring system helps these customers to manage their street light systems from any computer anywhere in the world. The operator has a secure internet connection and can control each individual street light via a wireless connection. By intelligently managing energy consumption in this way, local councils can expect to slash up to 40% from their energy bills.

Putting the spotlight on the core strategy

Martin Baum, Finance Director at Harvard Engineering explains, "Our solution is delivered as a managed service to our customers so it has to be hosted somewhere. We used to have all our own hardware and we tried to run everything from in-house as well as co-located from other premises. We supported the hardware ourselves, and although everything worked fine, it proved to be a significant overhead. On top of the costs, we were running out of physical space, and just supporting the amount of computer hardware we had was a full-time role for one of our staff members."

"It was really refreshing to have someone speak the same language and someone who really understood our business."

"No longer do we need to worry about maintaining hardware or spending unproductive time managing IT systems. Since partnering with Star, we can concentrate on what we are meant to be doing, which is system development and support." **Martin Baum, Finance Director, Harvard Engineering**

"We started to get requests from the councils for services with dual-site hosting, which we were not able to provide. We realised that in order to future-proof our service for our customers, we needed to find a way not only to maintain our hardware, but also to provide added resilience and robust Service Level Agreements, as requested by the local councils. We had to make a distinction between 'developing' and 'delivering' our LeafNut service if we were to make a serious step to realising the growth potential of our energy saving proposition."

He continues, "Whilst we were the right people to develop the solution, it didn't make sense to be distracted by the cost and complexity of building and maintaining the underlying infrastructure to deliver it, when someone else could do that more effectively for us. This meant we could free up our resources and pass on the cost savings to our financially conscious customers. Now we have a much more focussed operation and we apply our efforts where they count most; in delivering huge value to local councils who want to manage their costs and drive value to their customers, the general public, while making a powerful statement about their carbon reduction capability."

LeafNut can support savings of up to 100kg of carbon emissions per year on each street light, which equates to a potential saving of 377,000 tonnes in the UK alone. The councils can further save around £46 per year per street light.

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Solution enablement helps meet growing demand

Martin was introduced to Star through a trustworthy contact so he decided to investigate further, “We began by adding Star to our shortlist, and were encouraged by the high degree of technical competence displayed by the Star team. The staff we talked to during the evaluation process really impressed us with their knowledge. I just felt that they quickly grasped the complexities of our business and our technology and they always seemed to have well thought out and compelling advice for us. Star understood well the requirement to enable our solution so that the application is always available to local authorities who depend on the service 24/7.”

“We now have a platform that supports our growth strategy and is in keeping with our carbon reduction philosophy. Star’s robust, secure and managed services currently delivers the LeafNut web application to more than 30 local authorities to remotely control their street lighting, which combined comprises more than 40,000 street lights in all.”

Martin continues, “It was really refreshing to have someone speak the same language and someone who really understood our business. We were also encouraged by Star’s ability to support Linux as well as Microsoft operating systems, something we found not to be the case with many other hosting service providers.”

A scalable and resilient service

Harvard Engineering can now deliver capabilities for customers to manage and monitor data, such as power consumption sent and received by each street light. This is then communicated back to one of Star’s UK data centres. As more authorities are looking for opportunities to save on energy usage, it is crucial for Harvard to be able to add further capacity for local authorities on the secure platform quickly and seamlessly without investing in new and expensive hardware.

Martin concludes, “No longer do we need to worry about maintaining hardware or spending unproductive time managing IT systems. Since partnering with Star, we can concentrate on what we are meant to be doing, which is system development and support.

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