

# Richmond Events

Richmond Events right-sizes its business with cloud services

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## About Richmond Events

Richmond Events has changed the face of business conferences in the UK with a bold new format based on personalised meeting agendas and one-to-one supplier meetings, all within multi-day events which are free-to-attend for delegates and targeted at specific job roles.

From its roots over 20 years ago, Richmond Event's business model has relied on advanced database marketing - even before such a term was commonplace. The 75 employee London-based business still relies heavily on the intellectual property contained within its global IT systems staying ahead of fierce competition from rivals. The customer value Richmond Events provides both attendees and exhibitors is tightly-bound to its bespoke appointment system, affectionately called 'The Crunch'.

## The need for flexible IT

Liam Quinn, IT director at Richmond Events is proud that his IT systems offer delegates a richer choice of content and value than events from other companies.

"Our uniqueness is that delegates attending our events can create individual itineraries and no two itineraries are the same. People may not realise how complex a task this is, but it means all of our websites and CRM systems are bespoke. Customers can select from a richer set of supplier and conference information and in turn disclose more preferences. Our differentiation is our data and how we use this to meet our clients' needs."

"We have been searching for a panacea that would allow us to increase, or decrease, users as the business dictates and Star has helped us get there."

"Managed services give us the ability to make the right decisions at the right time so we always get good value and have services that are fit for purpose."

**Liam Quinn, IT Director, Richmond Events**

As an early adopter of managed hosted services, the flexibility offered has literally been a lifesaver for the company. While customer expectations have grown, the number of employees available to service these needs has gone the other way. The impact of the stock market crash of 2000, followed by September 11th led to a significant downturn in the industry and the company needed to re-size to survive.

Fortunately, the absence of substantial and inflexible investments in servers, software licences and the use of standardised virtual desktops (rather than PCs) meant IT could make the right business decision and scale down to a workforce around 50% of its pre-downturn level, without reducing operational capability. The subsequent procurement process was informed by this need for flexibility, agility and option to scale up as well as down whenever required, attributes which Star prides itself on.

## A new role for IT leaders

The role of the internal IT team is now significantly changed, focusing less on managing infrastructure and more on guaranteeing a quality end user experience. This means employees get a much richer service and Quinn can focus his resources on the core business, maintaining the company's differentiation in the events market they operate in. Quinn states, "Thanks to our eight years of experience with managed services, our day-to-day activities have changed significantly. We are no longer engaged in the typical cycle of daily interventions an IT team has to make just to keep the systems and people working. For a business of our size this would be a terrible drain on resources. Now, we are free to focus on areas like the support model - not necessarily what the escalation processes look like on paper - more how it works in real life."

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## A partnership of equals

Moving to cloud services though does not mean a life of leisure for Quinn's team. Rather there is a greater focus on the service levels that the business requires, as he explains:

"Just because we use a managed service provider doesn't mean we don't have control. We require the flexibility to run our business how we want to, yet have the support we need. Our customer teams are in constant communication to clients and potential clients all day and we must make sure they have access to the tools they need to facilitate the sales which are the lifeblood of our operations and must happen very smoothly."

Star's technical ability was enough for it to make the short list. However for Quinn, identifying a partner with a credible reputation for service delivery to similar sized organisations was crucial.

Quinn says, "Over the years I have found that selecting partners with a similar culture and positive attitude towards doing business with you is always reflected in the quality of service you get. As an IT buyer our custom has to be important to the partners we choose if we are to get good value; I never want to be a big fish in a small pond, or worse still, a small fish in a big pond."

"We want to be able to talk to one person, knowledgeable about our business and able to take responsibility for any actions. As a partnership relationship it's in our interest to review service levels regularly as circumstances and technologies change quickly these days and it's easy to become complacent or get caught out. A decision you made one year ago isn't necessarily the best value the next, but managed services give us the ability to make the right decisions at the right time so we always get good value and have services that are fit for purpose."

## An uneventful future

Looking back on Richmond Events' experience, it is clear that a similar path will be followed by many UK companies, who are just embarking on their cloud journey. Whether scaling up or down, the IT team always keeps its eye on the cost as well as the quality of service it provides the business.

Quinn concludes, "We have been searching for a panacea that would allow us to increase, or decrease, users as the business dictates and Star has helped us get there. Despite the fact we are now more virtualized than ever before, the

performance of our servers is far superior and the costs are far lower with Star."

The journey continues as Quinn looks for Star's help to bolster other areas of the business with new services to answer new business challenges. Given the valuable lessons it has learnt, Richmond Events is looking for more success, and a very innovative but very uneventful, bright IT future.

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