

Synergy

Synergy Benefits from Star's Business Services

Star[™]
 Your Business On-demand

About Synergy

The Synergy Housing Group is one of the largest social housing providers in the south of England. It helps build thriving neighbourhoods where people choose to live. Like any business, it relies on effective communication and the ability to grow and develop when the market demands. This requires a flexible and scalable IT infrastructure.

Understanding the issues

In 2006, the company reviewed its IT needs, including its current arrangements with its Internet Services Provider (ISP). Synergy's existing solution had functioned adequately, but did not allow enough flexibility to meet the needs of a growing business. Their existing infrastructure could not connect the company's 250 employees across three sites to a single data centre. Consequently, the decision was taken to review the existing system and find a solution that met the business's new requirements while remaining within strict IT budget constraints.

Due to the nature of the social housing business model, Synergy Housing needs to ensure that its offices are within close proximity to its tenants and leaseholders. Currently, the business has three main offices, approximately 30 miles apart, which need to share information and resources effectively with each other.

Addressing the issues

Following a review of the market and a comprehensive search process, Synergy selected Star Technology Services

"The implementation was a steep, but a necessary learning curve for our IT team because we were deploying a new network topology, that would have been difficult to configure without Star's expert knowledge and experience."

"Star understood the challenges we were facing and had innovated solutions to resolve them. This expertise meant that they were able to implement a new solution quickly."

Mark Bonelle, Synergy, IT Operations Manager

Ltd. Star has more than a decade's SMB-specific market expertise and was able to design a solution that specifically addressed the needs of Synergy's business. The package, using an MPLS architecture, has enabled Synergy to benefit from the best-of-breed connectivity, hosting, email and security technologies from leading providers without the financial, technical and resource costs associated with sourcing and implementing a solution independently.

It has reduced hardware by enabling local offices to access a single data centre and has also freed-up resources to develop forward-thinking IT strategies that support the business, rather than simply being troubleshooters.

Mark Bonelle, IT Operations Manager at Synergy, explains "We have known of Star for a number of years, through work they have done with organisations in the housing market and public sector. They were a natural choice when we were building our tender list. It was clear from the start that Star understood the challenges we were facing and had innovated solutions to resolve them. This expertise meant that they were able to implement a new solution quickly once we gave the go ahead. This meant limited disruption to the business; no downtime and a very smooth switch over."

The benefits

The core business impact of the new solution has been significant for Synergy Housing. Their multi-site MPLS network runs QoS to prioritise applications with Star's centralised managed firewall, ensuring that data carried across the network is safe from unauthorised viewers. Converging all data on to a single network also means there is a single Internet gateway for all users via Star's secure data centre, which protects Synergy from spam, malware

Call: 0800 915 6916 | Visit: www.star.co.uk | Email: info@star.net.uk

and viruses. With the high cost of bandwidth in Dorset, QoS and prioritisation of traffic were vitally important to Synergy. High speed connectivity improves employee productivity and makes for smoother running of each office while a single Internet connection saves on IT management time.

Mark Bonelle states "The implementation was a steep, but a necessary learning curve for our IT team because we were deploying a new network topology, that would have been difficult to configure without Star's expert knowledge and experience."

The benefits have been significant. Synergy is saving two hours of IT staff time every day - time that had previously been spent just managing spam. Star's network implementation also means Synergy is better placed to react to market needs; from connecting wardens in one-man offices to its network, to adding other small offices or even larger departments via broadband. These benefits could not have been achieved with the organisation's previous infrastructure.

Looking to the future

Mark Bonelle concludes, "We know from experience that when IT is not working properly people let us know very quickly. So, it's a sign of success for us that nobody is aware of the scale of the changes that have been made to our IT infrastructure. They have also recognised and appreciate the improvements a more advanced IT infrastructure brings to their daily work lives."

Synergy plans further growth as a result of the successful new infrastructure throughout 2008

"Star's expertise meant that they were able to implement a new solution quickly once we gave the go ahead. This meant limited disruption to the business; no downtime and a very smooth switch over."