

Case Study

Brecknell Willis

Clarity IT Advisors

www.clarityitadvisors.com

Project Outline

Brecknell Willis asked Clarity IT Advisors to create an IT development plan focused on business continuity, improved day-to-day operations and better integration and communication with their remote staff and branch offices across the globe.

Clarity IT Advisors were recommended to Brecknell Willis as a forward thinking consultancy with a proven track record of successful solutions throughout the south of England.



The Situation

The IT department is tasked with the ongoing development of the company's order tracking and manufacturing co-ordination software and this consumes a sizeable amount of their time. The legacy IT systems at Brecknell Willis were struggling to keep pace with the continued growth of the business and the pressures of internal software development.

Many of their users work remotely from branch offices, hotels and customer sites and Brecknell Willis was keen to ensure they had access to key documents, designs and e-mail whenever needed.

With over a hundred people using desktop and laptop computers, the IT department found it hard to support their users and introduce improvements and new systems to improve communication and day-to-day operations.

Brecknell Willis asked Clarity IT Advisors to help them design and implement new IT systems to address these issues.

The Solution

The first step was to talk to the people that actually use the IT system to discover their perspective, problems and needs. This information was combined with both the goals of the IT department and Brecknell Willis' business goals. This allowed Clarity IT to identify the key issues and define the objectives:

"We found that by using Clarity IT Advisors to review the systems we had in place, we could gain the benefits of their extensive knowledge of today's IT solutions and choose the options best suited to our businesses growth and development plan." David Steel, IT Manager

Business Continuity

IT systems and data needed to be better protected against hardware and software failures. Loss of data or systems failure could have extremely serious financial implications as well as loss of reputation.

Remote Access

Staff working remotely needed better access to documents, designs and e-mail. Better communication and collaboration would make it possible for staff to be more effective, efficient and respond to customer demands more quickly.

Improved System Management

IT systems, servers, desktops, etc. needed to be more self sufficient and require less day-to-day management by the IT department. This would free up IT personnel to allow them to a) concentrate on supporting their users and b) the development of Brecknell Willis' internal software.

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Customer Profile

Brecknell Willis is a leading global supplier of Railway Electrification systems.

Based in the south west of England they have been at the forefront of this sector since 1894 when they won the contract to supply Bristol Tramways with an electrification system, the first city in the UK to have this city wide.

They have ongoing contracts throughout Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and America, all run from their state of the art manufacturing plants in Chard, Somerset and Tianjin, China.

Recently, Brecknell Willis has been supplying rails and equipment to China as part of the transportation improvement plans for the 2008 Olympic Games.

"A very professional job, well planned and executed. I have no problem recommending Clarity IT Advisors to anyone. We will use them again without hesitation."

David Steel,
IT Manager

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Technologies Used

Microsoft Exchange 2007

- ✓ Allows use of advanced features such as "Push Email" for mobile users
- ✓ Unified Messaging enables users to store e-mail, voice mail and fax messages in one Inbox

Microsoft ISA Server 2006

- ✓ Increases system security to outside threats
- ✓ Allows greater control of outgoing web traffic
- ✓ Load balances internet traffic with automatic failover

Microsoft Windows 2003

- ✓ Reduces demand on IT department by automating many administrative tasks
- ✓ Improves business continuity using Distributed File System (DFS)

Microsoft SQL Server 2005

- ✓ Increased capabilities and failover options for database applications
- ✓ Extremely fast data processing; query times down from several minutes to less than three seconds.
- ✓ Allows end-users to create, share and manage their own reports

Terminal Services

- ✓ Allows remote access to fully featured desktops from global locations
- ✓ Reduced energy consumption, thin clients typically use 40% less power than a desktop PC

*Clear Solutions to
Complex Problems*

Meeting these objectives would ensure that Brecknell Willis:

- ✓ Could continue operating and meet customer demands and targets even in the event of a serious computing failure
- ✓ Better support remote staff making it more likely that projects could be completed early and additional contracts could be won
- ✓ Keep operating costs down by removing the need for additional IT support staff

The Next Step

Once all the issues were identified Clarity IT created a development plan for Brecknell Willis that would allow them to move forward and make improvements whilst minimising any disruption to their day-to-day business.

Implementing the Solution

The first stage of the development plan was to introduce a network infrastructure that was faster, more reliable and could make use of redundant links.

The second stage was the introduction of fault tolerant servers in two locations within the Brecknell Willis campus. These servers work in partnership and continually replicate key data and information between themselves ensuring it is available even if one of them fails or an entire server location becomes unavailable.

Access to and from the Internet was made secure, fault tolerant and load balanced using Microsoft ISA Server 2006. The loss of an Internet connection no longer stops e-mail or web traffic or prevents remote staff from accessing the information and documents they need.

Exchange Server 2007 was introduced to replace the existing legacy system and configured to allow local and remote staff to access their e-mail, calendars, etc using Microsoft Outlook, a web browser or their mobile phone. E-mails, appointments and contacts are "pushed" to the mobile phone of staff regardless of their location ensuring every employee is get up to date with the latest information.

The existing mission critical order tracking and manufacturing software was updated to use Microsoft SQL Server 2005 with database mirroring. This solution has not only decreased the software's response time from a few minutes to just few seconds, it also ensures that even with a serious computing failure it will still be accessible and useable.

Project Results

Since the completion of the installation works the system has performed beyond the expectations of Brecknell Willis. The end users have embraced the new functionality and are making the most of the features available to them.

"Clarity IT Advisors were both thorough and experienced. Communication was excellent throughout the process and they integrated seamlessly into our team. I'd recommend them to any company, except our competitors!" David Steel, Network Manager

With the extensive changes made to the back end technology the IT department have far greater control over the network and find the automated tasks have freed up large amounts of time to focus on smaller day to day IT issues.

Mobile users now have access to the network allowing them to increase their productivity while travelling, utilising previously wasted hours. This enables them to arrive back from business trips fully up to date with the business and most have commented how great it is not to be swamped by unopened email on arrival back at the office.

With a multi layered system geared for business continuity and resilience, Brecknell Willis now have a robust network that will deliver a cost effective and secure operation, allowing them to focus on their core business.



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