

Pannone LLP is a full service law firm with clients split almost equally between businesses and private individuals. With roots that can be traced back as far as 1852, the firm now has 380 solicitors, 92 partners and a total staff of 780.

Pannone prides itself on providing a quality service to its clients; a commitment that it claims is illustrated through the following accreditations and awards.

ISO9001 – first law firm in the UK to achieve accreditation in 1991

Lexcel – the Law Society’s Practice Management Standard

SQM – Specialist Quality Mark of the Legal Services Commission for our specialist departments in respect of publicly funded work (legal aid)

Investor in People

Pannone Solicitors was voted 5th in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies survey 2008 (the highest placed law firm in history of the survey) and was most recently voted 'Enterprising Law Firm of the Year 2007'.

The expression “Time is Money” is oft overused, but not in the case of a Law Firm, where IT failure can literally bring billing to a halt. Pannone’s server farm is based upon Microsoft 2003/2008. Recent implementation of VMware has greatly assisted with Data Centre administration and power conservation: an important consideration in a City Centre location dependent upon aging electrical infrastructure.

As you might expect with a leading Law Practice, efficient access to data is vitally important. To meet the demanding requirements of Users, Pannone invested in a NetApp Storage Area Network primarily because of the vendor’s close association with VMware.

When it comes to its network, Pannone is not inclined to take risk. It does not wish to be an early adopter of technology and nor does it seek to integrate multi-vendor hardware in order to take advantage of specific niche functionality. Instead it has adopted a Cisco network strategy covering all elements of private network connectivity from

Switches and Routers through to Firewalls, etc.

Microsoft dominates the desktop both in terms of operating system and generic office applications. Importantly, Pannone operates a sophisticated Case Management: a strategic application that underpins the efficient management of a wide variety of legal cases and ensuring that critical timescales are met further accentuating the importance of IT and systems availability to the Practice.

As you might expect, Pannone is heavily dependent upon the Internet for email and online research. However, for Pannone the importance of the Internet is increased through support of its Client Portal that is hosted on-site: a tangible measure of

the quality by which customers judge the “Pannone Difference”. Add remote 24/7 User access (enabled by 2008 Terminal Services) widely used to support home and out of hours working and the case for industrial strength Internet services is made.

During late 2008, Pannone’s IT Manager, Chris Styles, identified the need to review the capacity and operation of the Law Firm’s Internet access circuits; at the time comprising 2 x 2Mbps circuits from Verizon. In particular, he was very concerned about peak time Internet usage that was saturating the links; largely as a result of the extensive use of web casts.

“The Help Desk”, according to Mr Styles, “was increasingly receiving calls from Users frustrated about Internet response times: a problem for which we had no ‘flick of the switch’ resolution. We simply lacked sufficient bandwidth.”

Mr Styles’ review also raised concern about business continuity for whilst he had implemented an off-site DR strategy, fall back would require IP reconfiguration, which was not ideal as such manual intervention would inevitably delay failover at a time of extreme pressure.

To counter the bandwidth challenge, Chris explored the possibility of new circuits and upgrades and was faced with a 90-day delivery time, which prompted evaluation of alternative suppliers and his approach to Metronet.

THE BENEFITS

Prior to commissioning the Metronet circuit, Pannone’s Help Desk was regularly faced with calls from frustrated Users suffering poor Internet response times during peak times: calls that have now all but disappeared.

“At first I was sceptical about relying upon wireless communications for last-mile delivery of such strategically important circuits; however, when I learnt that Local Authorities depend upon Metronet circuits for CCTV monitoring I was prepared to take a leap of faith despite not having legal reference sites that I would ordinarily wish to consult.”

In terms of addressing business continuity concerns, Mr Styles recognised the value of having a diverse DR strategy comprising a triangulated network topology incorporating Metronet wireless circuits unequivocally independent of cable connections.

Initial consultation with Metronet’s Network Support Manager, Craig Timmis, introduced a novel approach to resolving issues with dealing with separate IP address ranges (and the associated need for IP reconfiguration in the event of disaster) in that Timmis recommended Pannone adopt and own its own IP range. The result would a) unlock Pannone from its network service suppliers and b) remove the need for complex configuration and reconfiguration when using two separate suppliers.

Craig oversaw the acquisition of Pannone’s IP range as part of the project management service.

By bringing Metronet together with Pannone’s Firewall supplier, Chris Styles oversaw the implementation of an “Active/Active” network configuration that would combine seamless business continuity failover with continuous availability of all circuits for day-to-day operations.

Metronet delivered a 14Mbps circuit capable of bursting to 25Mbps to accommodate peak-time utilisation, which of course triggered the initial network review. Mr Styles also drew comfort from the seamless upgrade path offered by Metronet that gives him the opportunity to increase bandwidth should he need to do so in the future.

Given the unusual complexity of the network configuration and taking into account the need for multiple supplier coordination, Chris Styles was impressed that the network went live within one month of the initial consultation.

With a fully resilient diverse triangulated network topology, Pannone has reinforced its business continuity strategy with a multi-vendor network.

Above all, Chris Styles now values the direct relationship that he has with technical authorities inside a suppliers business with which he can work in partnership to address any issues and concerns that arise from time to time.

IT STRATEGY

THE CHALLENGE

THE SOLUTION

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