



Client: M+A Partners
Website: www.mapartners.co.uk
Client size: 60 employees
Vertical industry: Accountancy Services
Location: Norwich

Business profile

Established in Norwich in 1917, M+A Partners is a major independent firm of business advisers, wealth managers and chartered accountants. With six Partners and fifty-five members of staff working from four offices, its single-minded aim is to maintain the highest possible standards of service for its many clients.

Services and solutions

- Managed Service Provision
 - Reactive Support
 - Proactive Maintenance
 - Strategic Guidance
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2003
 - Exchange Server 2003
 - SQL Server 2005
 - Windows 2003 Terminal Server
- Microsoft Desktop Product Portfolio
 - Windows XP Professional
 - Office 2003 Professional
- Core Hardware
 - HP ProLiant DL-class servers
 - Cisco Integrated Service Routers
 - Cisco Catalyst switches
 - Cisco Wireless Controller and Access Points
 - DBAM EP600 advanced bandwidth management for WAN acceleration
- Communications Products
 - Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express (CCME)
 - Cisco Unified IP Phones
 - Cisco Unified Call Connector for Microsoft Office
 - Blackberry Professional Software



M+A Partners head office, located within Norwich Cathedral Close.

21st century technology for a 21st century company

“The partners were delighted with how Breakwater ran the project for us. After significant planning and preparation they delivered it on time and on budget with no disruption at all to our day-to-day operations. We would not hesitate to recommend Breakwater to other organizations looking for an IT company that actually achieves what it promises.”

Jeremy Robson, Operations Director, M+A Partners

M+A Partners has operated as an established and highly regarded accountancy firm within the City of Norwich for the best part of a century. In the last few years the firm has relied upon Breakwater IT to provide a first-class outsourced IT Managed Service Provision incorporating strategic guidance, thus ensuring that M+A Partners remains at the forefront of technology. It was therefore only natural that the two companies would work closely together when M+A Partners made the decision to move premises in early 2009.

The problem

With the relocation of their head office to new premises within the historic Close of Norwich Cathedral scheduled for early March 2009, M+A Partners recognised that an opportunity existed to reassess their IT technology needs, and address the issues presented by their existing, ageing IT infrastructure.

The key issues that needed to be addressed were:

- **Poor network performance:** Without any means of optimising network usage between the four regional offices, network performance across the firm was both slow and unreliable.
- **Antiquated communications:** The existing telephone and communications platform was antiquated, provided limited functionality, and was costly to run and maintain.
- **Ageing server platform:** The existing server hardware was reaching the end of its lifespan, providing limited scalability, and both poor performance and reliability.
- **High overheads:** The existing distributed IT environment was too

costly to operate and difficult to manage.

To address these issues, M+A Partners identified the need for strategic guidance to design and implement new solutions for both data and voice provision within the new premises. This would not only serve to facilitate the future needs of the business, but also allow for delivery in a way that would not impact the ongoing day-to-day running of the firm.

The solution

M+A Partners worked closely with Breakwater IT to design a new (75 user) IT infrastructure solution, fit for M+A Partners 21st Century business model. After completing a critical assessment of the business needs and objectives of M+A Partners, a decision was made to deploy all services centrally from the new head office site.

The infrastructure was designed in accordance with the recommended best-practices and proven technology platforms manufactured by our industry leading partners: Cisco (Unified

“Converged” Communications hardware and software); Microsoft (Server and Desktop software); Hewlett Packard (Server hardware); DBAM (Packet Shaping technology); Sophos (Anti-Virus software); and Websense (Internet Security software).

Network

Multiple Wide Area Network (WAN) business-class ADSL links were installed from ZEN Internet, to provide additional capacity and greater fault-tolerance. Additionally a single DBAM EP600 device was deployed at the head office in order to intelligently route network traffic across the additional ADSL links. The device also enables advanced bandwidth management, WAN acceleration, Quality-of-Service (QoS) and load balancing across the network links.

Communications

Breakwater IT chose a Cisco Unified Communications platform to offer M+A Partners a new way to communicate. This comprehensive and secure system of voice, video, data, and mobility products and applications would enable M+A Partners to use their network as a secure platform for effective and collaborative communication.

Servers

To address the ageing server platform, Breakwater IT elected to replace the existing server hardware with new components from HP. In addition the domain was upgraded to Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2, in order to take advantage of automated file-replication and storage-management efficiencies. In total, the previous 11 servers were consolidated into just 5 units, with an additional two servers installed to provide a dedicated online backup solution. In order to provide a reliable and feature-rich experience for remote users, a Microsoft Terminal Services solution was deployed alongside Exchange 2003 Web and Mobile Access. In conjunction with Blackberry Professional software, this ensured that Breakwater IT was able to deliver an “office anywhere” solution.

The benefits

By using premium hardware and software technologies supplied by the aforementioned vendors, infrastructure design, quality, performance and scalability were all met within the solution.

The project was delivered on-time and within budget (a testament to Breakwater IT’s adoption of PRINCE2 project management methodologies), with the return-on-investment (ROI) forecast to be inside 3 years.

The key features and benefits delivered to M+A Partners post the conclusion of the project are as follows:

- **Streamlined centralisation and system operation:** High availability and optimal performance between branches and central site, with less dependence on the capacity of the network.
- **Enhanced communications:** The deployed voice-over-IP (VoIP) telephony solution is highly scalable, cost-effective, and provides advanced functionality, such as e-mail notification of voicemail messages.
- **End-to-end security:** The Cisco network provides enhanced security that protects the network from internal and external threats. The integrated security solution also simplifies security management and greatly reduces the total cost of network ownership.
- **High network availability:** The Cisco networking architecture provides high-capacity, redundant data links across the core of the network, resulting in high availability and fault-tolerance.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** An end-to-end solution approach reduces complexity and network management costs. Modular and scalable products help reduce costs of future expansion. M+A Partners can receive trade-in value for all purchased Cisco products against the cost of new Cisco products as and when required going forward. Elimination of all inter-branch call costs because these calls are now ‘internal’ - calls are free of charge between the two sites and calls out to the PSTN networks are less expensive than they were when the old analogue system that was previously in use.

By embracing IT, Breakwater IT believe that M+A Partners has significantly improved their efficiency and gained a commercial edge over their competitors.



Partners: Mary-Anne Sargeant, Chris Dugdale, Iain Mawson, Martin Jermy, William Hill, Alistair Fish
Operations Director: Jeremy Robson

Breakwater IT

Based in Norwich, Breakwater IT brings together an array of highly skilled industry professionals competent in the design, development, implementation and support of information technology systems. We’re dedicated to providing clients with the right IT solution to help take their business forward.

To find out how your business could benefit from a superior managed service provision from Breakwater IT, why not speak to a consultant today by calling: [01603 709300](tel:01603709300).

For further information about Breakwater IT please visit our website: www.breakwaterit.co.uk

“M+A Partners are very progressive in terms of looking to exploit their IT systems to maximise efficiencies. I believe that Breakwater have demonstrated, not just in this IT Refresh project but over many successful years of service, to be an excellent strategic partner for the firm. The technologies are akin to those being deployed in many businesses who are serious about IT as a strategy rather than an overhead, and will comfortably support M+A Partners business requirements now and well into the future.”
Stephen Bowles, Managing Director, Breakwater IT