Case Study: Concept Smoke

Background

Concept Smoke Systems are leading providers of artificial smoke machines for a variety of applications, including Fire Training, Leak Testing and Security Systems. With 50 years' experience behind them, they are in an unrivalled position to supply and advise on these technologies. However, to be able to provide such services, Concept are reliant on their IT systems, which include email, Sage and Act.

Systems review

Eight years ago IT-QED worked with Concept to review their current systems and develop a plan to upgrade them to run on more modern, responsive and redundant HP hardware platforms. The review concluded that the hardware would run their current Microsoft Small Business Server 2003 comfortably, while having the capacity to upgrade to Small Business server 2011 at the appropriate time. Their PCs were also upgraded and are still running smoothly, thanks to monthly maintenance by IT-QED.

Migration

Recently, Concept decided to update their systems (Small Business Server 2003, Act and Sage) to the latest versions. IT-QED was pleased to carry out an upgrade to Small Business Server 2011 and the latest versions of Act and Sage. The work was carried out within office hours and retained the original hardware that was still running under the original 5 year warranty. Owing to the migration approach used, downtime was kept to a minimum. As part of the migration, a full disaster recovery simulation was carried out with the entire server, showing that all applications were being recovered within three hours.

Benefits

The server hardware, due to its built-in redundancy, has served Concept well. There have been no unexpected outages, and when a power supply has failed, the server has simply emailed IT-QED to let them know and then continued running on the spare while waiting for the failed supply to be replaced.

The upgrade to Small Business Server 2011 provided the following benefits to Concept:

- Enhanced backup, taking three snapshots per day
- Enhanced disaster recovery capabilities (tested to prove the concept)
- Reduction in SPAM emails and access to emails from Outlook, mobiles and a web browser

- Users able to access their PCs remotely via a web page, without the use of a VPN
- Users able to access files remotely via a web browser or mobile phone
- A stable platform on which to run applications such as SAGE and ACT
- Comprehensive system monitoring with notifications, making the owners aware of system status
- More reliable, secure internet provided by a Cisco firewall/router.

Ongoing support

IT-QED have been providing full support to Concept for over eight years. Concept know that any issues will be dealt with quickly and appropriately and, because of the way IT QED are organised geographically, they can expect an engineer to be on site within 30 minutes in an emergency.

itQED have been managing our IT for 8 years and we completely trust then to look after our best interests, they make it their business to ensure the necessary systems are in place and always available. Their support is excellent and I would highly recommend them to anyone.

Trevor Dunnington – Managing director