

Case History: The Cystic Fibrosis Trust

Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is the UK's most common life-threatening inherited disease affecting 7500 babies, children and adults in the UK. The average life expectancy is just 31 years old. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust aims to ensure that people with CF receive the best possible care and support in all aspects of their lives. Every year, the Trust is committed to spending at least £8 million. This money funds medical research into treating and curing CF, clinical support and family care.

This challenge is at the centre of CFT's operations and, with charities having to compete more actively for public donations, CFT has had to invest in the resources to do the job, and that includes IT. So it was that, in April 2005, IT Manager Peter Hawkins decided to expand his department by 100%. As Peter will tell you, dryly, "That made a total of two of us!"

It's the classic example of the recent expansion in the SME market that has forced vendors and service providers to reassess their SME strategy. With IT prices falling and SME's enjoying sustained growth over recent years, suddenly the small business has become a key investor in IT at every level – networks, infrastructure and software.

One company that has responded to this opportunity is Networks Unlimited (NU). Run by Managing Director Peter Reynolds, NU was approached in January 2005 by Adventnet, an unknown software developer based in India with an OE client base that reads like the Who's Who of network management (IBM, HP, CA, etc). Having built network management tools for others, Adventnet decided to build their own, and they called it the ManageEngine range.

Having signed up as UK Distributor, NU immediately found themselves with a staggering range of 14 new IT management tools, all with exceptional functionality and all priced well within SME budgets. Some 12 months later, there are now 24 products and, according to Peter Reynolds, sales are growing at a rate he has never seen in his 15 years in the business.

Amongst these sales, and typical of the SME customers, was CFT. Having met with NU at the Helpdesk show, Peter Hawkins immediately bought the ManageEngine product ServiceDesk Plus, an IT helpdesk and asset management software tool. The initial purpose of ServiceDesk was to identify requirements for future IT support – types of fault and time taken to resolve – and to justify IT recruitment. The tool was then used successfully in its more conventional role, managing support for the 45 users at the Bromley head office plus the other 25 users at the regional offices.

After this, there was no looking back. Attracted by the low cost/high functionality formula, Peter Hawkins went on to buy OpManager, the complete network and applications monitoring tool, quickly followed by ScanFi, Patch Manager, Eventlog Analyzer and, most recently, Applications Manager.

“They all possess the same qualities – easy to use, easy to configure and easy to understand,” says Peter Hawkins. “There are several good products in this arena, but this beats the lot in terms of functionality and sheer value for money”.

So what does the future hold for CFT’s IT strategy? There are only another 18 ManageEngine products to go for the full set!

“Our big issue is alignment. Fulfilling the business needs of both our internal and external customers. There’s no room these days for guesswork or gut-feel. We must have a clear business case for all our investment.”

“The charity market is like any other. We must compete for funds and we need to adapt to constantly changing market conditions. With this in mind, we’re looking at a converged voice and data network, with all the additional services that could bring to our operations.”

“Either way, it’s affordable software like ManageEngine that’s enabling us to consider this sort of thing. Not that there is software like ManageEngine!”

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust

Cystic Fibrosis affects 7500 babies, children and adults in the UK. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust, founded in 1964, is the UK’s only national charity working to fund research into a cure and to ensure appropriate clinical care and support for people with Cystic Fibrosis (CF). The Trust needs to raise £8 million per year to fund this vital work. Find out more at www.cftrust.org.uk



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