

Child cancer charities' merger a win-win

- **National MPLS-based network improves communication, allows savings to be put to better use**
- **Reliable and flexible managed service allows more focus on patients and survivors**
- **Combined charity better positioned to leverage synergies of merger**

About CLIC Sargent:

Clear synergies led to the merger of two charities, CLIC and Sargent Cancer Care for Children, in 2005. Both were dedicated to the support of children and young people with cancer, and their families.

- Sargent Cancer Care for Children had focused on care for the individuals and families affected following diagnosis, including assigning helpers to assist them through the experiences to follow, and financial assistance.
- CLIC (Cancer and Leukaemia in Childhood) had focused on nursing support and research, providing dedicated CLIC wards in NHS hospitals, and improving both treatment of patients, and the quality of life experienced by survivors.

The Challenge:

As with any merger, CLIC Sargent were faced with both challenges and opportunities.

In terms of information technology, they were faced with two separate networks, a range of technologies and the need to integrate these as efficiently, quickly and cost-effectively as possible, to allow the charity to focus on its primary objectives, and to grow in the future.

However, this provided the opportunity to bring existing technology up to date, eliminate duplication and leverage capabilities which could allow CLIC Sargent to become even more effective in its support of cancer patients, survivors and families.

As well as two main offices in Bristol and Hammersmith (their HQ), CLIC Sargent now had nine further regional offices. Their priorities following the merger were therefore to:

- **Integrate** the two networks
- Enable and improve **communication** between staff at all locations
- **Secure** the network and the – often highly sensitive – information stored and transmitted
- Provide the **scalability** and **flexibility** required for future growth
- Obtain **best value** by procuring the best value solution at the lowest cost
- Select a reliable and trusted partner who could provide a **fully-managed service**

CLIC Sargent wanted to modernise their IT service in a scalable way, retaining independence from the Local Authorities with whom they often work. Existing telecommunications services were provided by multiple suppliers, and the IT department wished to move away from managing these to focus on their core competence: supporting the charity's specialist 'line of business' internal systems, desktops and laptops and the staff who use them.

With staff operating in up to 50 different locations across the UK, such as charity offices, shops, hospitals and respite homes, a solution was required that would bring these staff together as a team to share information and best practice.

Paul Blackmore, CLIC Sargent's IT Director recalls, "...we faced significant challenges, and failure to solve them would have negated the many benefits of the merger. However, we resolved to grasp this opportunity to put in place a managed infrastructure on which we could build and manage the services crucial to the charity's staff in supporting cancer patients and survivors. Of course, we want to put as much of the funds we raise as possible to use directly, so we were looking for a way of doing this without spending the earth, and if possible making savings".

Why hSo?

CLIC Sargent had been experiencing unsatisfactory levels of customer service from their incumbent WAN provider. Rather than upgrade their older network, CLIC Sargent went through a tendering process, inviting hSo, amongst other competitive managed service providers, to propose a solution to match their requirements.

As an existing customer, CLIC Sargent were familiar with hSo's relationship-led, customer-centric approach. Internet access provided by hSo in their Hammersmith office, one of many such buildings where hSo-provided optical fibre was available, had produced "... results that we'd never had before" according to Paul. "The level and quality of the support, was head and shoulders above what we'd received from other organisations".

In addition to the trust already established, hSo's secure, flexible and scalable solution met all of CLIC Sargent's requirements, and provided opportunities to enhance the IT services they provided internally, whilst saving money over alternatives, and therefore hSo was selected.

The Solution:

hSo's proposal was able to deliver in all these key areas.

- **hSo:CONNECT**

A Wide Area Network using MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switched) technology connects all office locations. MPLS provides a secure, private, any-to-any topology, allowing any location to send and receive data to and from any other.

Sites can be added and removed, and bandwidth can be increased or decreased without wholesale network disruption.

The use of MPLS technology makes this a truly 'next generation' network, and in the future the network can be used to transmit practically any kind of IP data, such as voice or video calls between offices at no cost, or to 'least cost route' external calls if required.

- **hSo:SECURE+**

Secure firewalls protect the perimeter, allowing easy-to-use access for staff working off-site using Virtual Private Networking (VPNs), yet maintaining the integrity of the internal network.

- **hSo:COLOCATION**

Co-location of CLIC Sargent servers at hSo data centres, seamlessly, redundantly and securely integrated within their private MPLS WAN, allowed their IT department to centralise services such as the patient database, a single email system and the intranet. These services can be easily upgraded, and other additional network services can be provided in the future, instantly available via the hSo:CONNECT MPLS WAN to every member of staff.

The Benefits:

hSo's integrated solution is made possible by virtue of a modern, legacy-free network, core MPLS technology that delivers real business benefits, economies of scale and multiple supplier management, as well as a genuine commitment to service quality and individual customer relationships that cannot be provided by larger, less agile competitors.

hSo met and exceeded all CLIC Sargent's priority requirements, resulting in:

- Seamless **integration** of the two network infrastructures, allowing CLIC Sargent to leverage the potential synergies of their merger
- Easy and efficient **communication** between both office and off-site locations for all staff
- The right balance of convenient access to resources and vital **security**
- A **flexible** network, allowing sites to be added or removed and capacity to be up- or downgraded as needed, together with a centralised yet resilient infrastructure for IT services, that can be easily **scaled** up or down in terms of capacity or functionality (e.g. Voice over IP) when required
- A well-designed, highly **cost-effective** solution, making the best use of valuable donations, whilst not wastefully diverting resources away the primary services offered by the charity
- A **fully-managed solution** that 'just works', provided by a trusted and expert partner, available 24/7

Choosing a new supplier can be a risky business, and it is often not until the proposed solution has been provided for some time, that a conclusion can be reached as to whether the right decision was made. With hindsight, Paul Blackmore now feels confident it was in this case, and feels he can rely on the service provided: "People take good service for granted until it falls over – we have had a consistently reliable service from hSo."

CLIC Sargent now face their future with solid network foundations. Being able to rely on the solution provided by hSo, allows their IT department to focus on their critical role in the charity's mission to support young cancer patients, survivors and their families.

To find out more, call us today on 020 7847 4510

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