

Case Study

K3 Managed Services solves Coleman Milne network infrastructure problems

Coleman Milne is a highly respected and well-established specialist vehicle company that is located in Bolton, Lancashire. The company provides a range of customised vehicles, which are competitively priced, economical to operate and of a quality appropriate to their function. At the heart of the operation is a fully integrated SYSPRO ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system running on a new Microsoft network, designed and implemented by K3 Business Technology Group (K3).

Coleman Milne's customers include corporations, financial institutions, nationalised industries, local authorities, government departments, police forces, limousine hire companies and funeral directors. Vehicles have also been supplied to British and overseas Royal Families. The company also sells used vehicles and offers a vast aftermarket range of spare parts to keep these vehicles serviceable and roadworthy.

With 165 staff spread over two sites, Coleman Milne requires the highest level of work and commitment from all of its employees. It expects the same level of performance from its service providers, including K3 Managed Services who started a working relationship with the business in 2009.

Immediate communication is critical for business

Charles Sorry is Coleman Milne's IT manager. Following ongoing problems with the company's server that was disrupting the email system, he contacted K3 for assistance. He had learned of the company's versatile IT support division at a Manchester user conference held in late 2008 and recognised that the firm had a serious part to play in helping Coleman Milne's overcome its IT problems.

K3 Managed Services, a division of K3 Business Technology Group who is one of Microsoft's largest channel partners in the UK. This K3 Division is in a unique situation compared to other IT firms, in that it understands the complexities of supporting K3's products and has the knowledge and experience of understanding how modern day IT solutions can be put to best use for its clients-

"This is a business that depends on immediate communication between staff, customers and potential customers, we need constant 24/7 access to email," says Charles Sorry. "We are a niche business and have clients all over Europe and in Australia. If we experience any disruption with our email server, orders can be delayed and potential business lost."

“After experiencing problems with the hard-drive of our server we called in a local company to put things right but unfortunately things did not get any better. Therefore, I called in K3. The Managed Services team has a good working knowledge of our SYSPRO system and the other Microsoft Windows based applications we use and was able to get things in place quickly with minimum disruption.”

Additionally, billing, material procurement and aftermarket parts sales are important everyday tasks that are executed via Coleman Milne’s email system. K3 found that it was more than a hard drive issue that blighted Coleman Milne. In fact, Coleman Milne’s entire Microsoft Windows network infrastructure had corrupted due to the malfunctioning hardware and the server’s Active Directory was failing in its ability to authenticate users with their passwords and barring some of them from the network.

As Neil Homer of K3 Managed Services takes up the story, *“Active Directory corruptions can take time and money to sort out and bring some work to a standstill. We carried out an audit to decide the best possible course of action which led to us designing a solution that was reliable, robust and that addressed other requirements we uncovered in the process.*

Immediate results from K3 Managed Services intervention

Neil and his team worked closely with Charles Sorry. It was decided that a server was require to provide a completely new and reliable network and email system. K3 Managed Services migrated all the existing Coleman Milne data over to the new system as part of the managed service solution.

“K3 Managed Services team upgraded us to the latest version of Microsoft Windows Server and Microsoft Exchange Server. This was done over 10 days and we experienced little or no down time so that we continued to use our business critical applications,” says Charles Sorry.

“From an IT manager’s point of view I saw an immediate benefit from this and since April 2009, when the system went live, we’ve had no issues with it.”

He adds: *“It now gives us totally flexibility in that staff can log into the system from wherever they are and experience a secure and robust platform from which to work from. The K3 technicians also have instant access to the network and can offer us immediate support if it is ever needed.”*

The next job for Charles Sorry is to start planning for a new server for SYSPRO with a network support system.

“At the end of the day we can’t afford the system to fail us. We would happily work with the K3 team again as these are the people who have the expertise in these areas and know exactly what our business needs,” concludes Charles Sorry.

Ends

820 words

About K3 Managed Services

K3 Managed Services designs and delivers hosted and cloud computing solutions to users in over 30 countries. Operating out of ISO 27001 Data Centre facilities in Edinburgh, London and New York; K3 provides Microsoft based business planning and management solutions principally to retailers and manufacturers.

We specialise in end-to-end IT solutions to help you gain more from your investment in people and technology. Our flexible portfolio allows us to tailor solutions to your needs; reducing costs, reducing risk and adding value.

K3 Managed Services are part of K3 Business Technology Group Plc, an AIM listed business systems solutions group with over 3,000 customers globally including large to mid-tier retailers, manufacturers and distributors. With this significant and growing customer base, K3 is one of Microsoft's largest channel partners in the UK and is a member of Microsoft's 'Inner Circle' Club which is reserved for the top 60 partners worldwide.