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Ricoh IT Services partnership with Vodafone underpins customer service excellence

Vodafone's reputation as a global communications provider relies on the quality and availability of its network. Vodafone needed an IT services supplier that had the expertise, experience and capability to support the network. With Ricoh IT Services, Vodafone has a partner who is helping to enhance brand image and deliver a trusted and value-driven service. The success of the partnership has led to Ricoh winning additional IT service and document management contracts for Vodafone across EMEA.

Executive summary

Name:	Vodafone Group Plc
Location:	Newbury, Berkshire
Size:	436m customer, 89,000 employees
Activity:	Telecommunications

Challenges

- Vodafone needed cost reduction, and improved operational efficiency within its IT operation
- Existing supplier roster was too large and inefficient

Solution

- Ricoh IT Services – Networking and IT operations support
- Ricoh consolidated suppliers; delivers EMEA-wide managed services

Benefits

- Helps Vodafone enhance its reputation for delivering a first-class service to customers
- Delivers better, more cost-effective operational efficiency
- Supports development of new, strategic services, such as M2M
- Partnership with Ricoh consolidates 40 supplier contracts down to one
- Makes outsourcing network and IT operations value-driven and cost effective
- Delivers a 10-year partnership built on trust and respect for Ricoh expertise
- Success of existing partnership led to contract expansion

Challenges

Vodafone is one of the world's largest telecommunications companies. It has around 436 million customers around the world, operates in 26 countries and partners with networks in over 50 more countries. Vodafone provides a wide range of communications services, which now include not just mobile voice and data services, but also fixed telephony, broadband and business communications.

Most recently, Vodafone has been spearheading development of Machine-to-Machine (M2M) communications.

One of Vodafone's most important assets is its telecommunications network, around which it delivers its services and over which millions of customers use voice calls, texts and mobile internet connectivity. To ensure this and other aspects of its IT operations continued to function effectively, Vodafone decided to centralise its European network and IT operations. The company uses a number of suppliers to support this and other critical business operations. As part of its centralisation strategy, Vodafone wanted to improve the way it selected and managed these suppliers, moving away from just cost reduction, towards efficiency and value-for-money as well. The strategy was to bundle together similar and complementary operations and bring in the best suppliers to service these bundles. This approach has allowed Vodafone to reduce the number of suppliers, while driving greater value from the remaining ones.

Ricoh has been providing firewall and security services to Vodafone in the UK since 2003. But Vodafone wanted to significantly expand this partnership and it put out a global tender. As well as Ricoh some of the world's leading IT companies bid for the business.

Adrian Smith, Regional Head of Operations at Vodafone,

says, "Despite being up against some of the biggest players in the industry, Ricoh was successful in winning the tender. And Ricoh won because of its presentation and communication of its services, which was particularly professional. But it was also Ricoh's flexible approach to our business challenges, innovative approach and ideas and, of course, a very competitive cost."

Solution

Ricoh is providing a range of managed IT services to support and maintain Vodafone's network infrastructure – including the mobile communications network, Vodafone's internal enterprise data network - and IT operations. As well as these services, Ricoh supplies hardware and software, professional services and consultancy to Vodafone.

Under the agreement, Ricoh also supports a number of one-off projects, such as firewall and network upgrades. Ricoh provides seven on-site engineers, a service delivery manager and technical consultant at Vodafone's headquarters in Newbury. Vodafone also has access to Ricoh's nationwide team of IT and networking experts. The Ricoh service covers over 50 office locations and networking hubs across the UK.

The success of the existing partnership between Ricoh and Vodafone has led to a significant expansion of the relationship in Europe. Vodafone has extended its contract with Ricoh to include network and security infrastructure support for Vodafone data centres in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Italy. In addition, Vodafone has also awarded Ricoh a new contract for a Ricoh Managed Document Service in 11 EMEA countries, with additional regions to follow. Ricoh has also won a global contract to deliver a wireless print solution for Vodafone's retail stores.

Smith says, "Ricoh is also working with Vodafone on some of our key strategic projects, such as machine to machine services - like connected car and connected house services - which are very high profile programmes within Vodafone. Ricoh is helping us develop and deliver those services."

Benefits

Smith says, "There are three benefits working with Ricoh - customer service, cost effectiveness and simplification. Customer service is the most important because our customers expect fantastic service - 100 percent availability, phone calls and texts working all the time and mobile connectivity. Ricoh's IT and security service helps us deliver an outstanding customer experience. Centralising contracts under one supplier - Ricoh - helps reduce costs and standardise processes, tools and ways of working across multiple countries making operations simpler, which again helps customer service and operational flexibility."

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For Vodafone, the quality of service and innovation that Ricoh delivers is one of the stand-out features of the partnership. Smith says, "Our partnership with Ricoh is different from the typical supplier-customer relationship. There's a single account and services team which is unique. Ricoh engineers sit directly with my engineers, which helps develop the relationship and the trust. Ricoh is also very flexible, so if I have an operational issue, I can count on the Ricoh team to work on that problem with no questions about the contract. And there's Ricoh's innovation, whether that's contractual or continuous improvement in the operational services. The bottom line is that this all helps with my customer service excellence."

Ricoh's flexibility was exemplified by an incident that could have disrupted Vodafone's service delivery. There was a technical problem in one of Vodafone's data centres outside Ricoh's responsibility. Nevertheless, Ricoh sourced the replacement equipment and even flew out an engineer to help Vodafone solve the problem.

One of the other key benefits of the Ricoh service has been to help Vodafone reduce costs. Ricoh's IT service capability means it is able to support over 30 different hardware and software products. Previously, Vodafone had multiple suppliers for this, resulting in a much larger administration overhead. Equally, Ricoh's ability to take responsibility for parts of Vodafone's network and IT environment, which were previously handled by several suppliers, further increases efficiency and reduces costs.

Smith says, "Ricoh started in the UK with security and firewall services and we expanded that across Europe into our data centres. On the back of that success we now work with Ricoh on managing multi-contract, multi-vendor platforms. In the past, we used to have many small contracts and it was very difficult for the teams to manage these. So we packaged this together with Ricoh as the single point of contact for some 30 or 40 different supplier contracts."

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh IT Services
- Services include - networking, vendor management, resourcing, IT operations, data centre managed service
- Strategic service programme support

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