

Case Study

Utilita Energy
Business Services & Solutions
Energy utility

Utilita partners with Ricoh to power extraordinary business growth



Ricoh has acted as a trusted and critical partner to enable Utilita Energy - the UK's leading pay-as-you-go energy supplier – to transform its business operations and IT infrastructure. Without Ricoh's support the company

believes it would have struggled to grow rapidly from a 90-person SME into a 2,000-strong corporation serving 500,000 customers around the UK in just three years.

Executive summary

Name: Utilita Energy
Location: Eastleigh, Hampshire
Size: 2,000 staff, 500,000 customers
Activity: Energy utility

Challenges

- Rapidly expanding and changing business
- Existing IT infrastructure unable to support growth

Solution

- Ricoh Business Services & Solutions
 - Business & IT consultancy
 - IT infrastructure design and build
 - Associated business systems & services

Benefits

- Establishes Ricoh as critical to driving business change
- Helps transform 90-staff SME to a large 2,000-strong corporate
- Delivers new IT infrastructure, business systems and HQ in 3 years during rapid business growth
- Cuts 38 suppliers to 5, with Ricoh handling 80% of IT budget
- Trusted advisor status wins Utilita's largest, single IT project for Ricoh

Challenges

Utilita Energy is an independent energy supplier that supplies prepayment gas and electricity to customers. Since its foundation in 2003, Utilita has established itself as Britain's leading supplier of smart pre-pay energy. It offers a fair energy deal to lower income and energy-conscious households and is committed to offering competitive tariffs and user-friendly ways to 'pay-as-you-go'. The company provides every customer with a free smart meter for real-time remote top-up, monitoring usage and credit control.

Over the last few years, Utilita has seen rapid growth with turnover increasing from £180m to £500m and staff from 90 to almost 2,000. But while the business started evolving from an SME to a large corporation, IT struggled to keep pace. Facilities needed to support a large and growing user base were insufficient or not in place.

Equipment and systems were six or seven years old and there were 38 different suppliers providing a raft of different IT services, some overlapping and others on long, punitive contracts. Not only was IT outdated, systems and infrastructure were not fit to support a rapidly expanding business. Utilita needed a more robust, but agile IT infrastructure that would allow the business to grow.

The picture was further complicated by a move to a new head office and a small IT team that did not have the scope or resources to deliver change. Realising action was needed, Utilita appointed Phil Roberts – who has extensive corporate IT and consultancy experience – as IT Director. At the time, Utilita's print supplier, Ricoh, was talking to the company about renewing its print contract. Aware of the IT challenges Utilita faced, the Ricoh print consultant suggested that Roberts speak with Ricoh IT Services (ITS).



Roberts says, "The challenge was finding a company that understood what the business needed and had the agility and ability to assist. Our existing supplier base was a lot of small organisations who were average at delivering what they did, so I picked Ricoh as one of the up and coming threats in IT services. Ricoh fitted into that middle ground – it understands big company mentality but can also engage with a small, but growing company, and not many organisations seemed to be able to do that. The standard off-the-shelf service wouldn't work for us any more, we needed much more flexibility and Ricoh understood that right from the beginning."

Solution

As part of its Business Services & Solutions offering, Ricoh has delivered a range of IT consultancy and practical projects to Utilita. The relationship began with Ricoh carrying out a service and technology ITIL audit covering all of Utilita's IT infrastructure and systems to provide a detailed and quantifiable assessment of what the business needed. Utilita had two main objectives – stabilisation and improvement.

The office relocation to a greenfield site was an opportunity for Utilita and Ricoh to roll out a completely new IT infrastructure. This involved replacing Citrix with a Remote Desktop Services (RDS) environment and a new underlying network and virtualised server infrastructure with some on-site servers, but mostly off-site hosting and disaster recovery.

In addition, Ricoh worked with Utilita across a number of IT projects including stock and asset management, service desk, IT monitoring and management solutions, hardware acquisition, security audit and telephone system.

"Rico became an extension of our IT team and that is where Ricoh as trusted advisor was established. You know you can pick up the phone and know that nothing is too much trouble. Having a single point of contact has been a huge benefit and now that the framework agreement is in place, the contracting of new projects and equipment is a lot less painful," says Roberts. "Recently Ricoh has won the largest, single IT project that Utilita has ever done and now Ricoh is taking about 80 percent of our IT budget, I would not give a partner that if I didn't trust them,"

Benefits

Ricoh has been fundamental to Utilita transforming its IT infrastructure so that it can support and enable rapid business growth.

Roberts says, "Utilita could not have achieved the IT transformation it has or grown the business rapidly without the support and trusted partnership with Ricoh. Just three years ago Utilita was a 90-person business running on

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eight-year-old IT equipment in two offices. Now we're just shy of 2,000 employees with a new HQ and offices around the country serving half a million customers."

Roberts adds, "I used to have 38 suppliers of IT 'stuff' now with Ricoh I have one main provider of IT solutions. I can turn to Ricoh and say this is where the business needs to go, how can you assist? Ricoh won't just come up with this widget or that widget, it makes you think about the right solutions and right partners to deliver what you need. While others are rarely able to deliver on their promises, Ricoh really does. It provides the services and systems for where we need to go and that is always going to benefit our end customers. I can't see how we can do what we need to do without Ricoh's support."

Ricoh provides two aspects of service and support to Utilita. The first is around managing and supporting functional elements of IT where the business can delegate things like on-going support operations and managing equipment to Ricoh and be confident that they will be delivered to a high standard. Ricoh shares ownership for these services with Utilita, as well as keeping Utilita on track to ensure effective service delivery.

The other key element of Ricoh's role is as a professional advisor. Roberts says, "When you're faced with a constantly changing and fast-growing organisation, you don't have the time to look at all the solutions. But having the trust in a partner like Ricoh that can go out and find that information and come back quickly with the right solution, it saves a whole load of time, energy and pain. You need this kind of relationship to discuss and get insights into what's new, what's good and what works. But Ricoh won't just take us on face value and sell us something we don't need, it is having someone who is honest and prepared to say no."

Going forward, Utilita and Ricoh are now planning to roll out IT improvements and new infrastructure to other locations around the UK that support regional customer services and manage operations such as telesales, business-to-business services, call centre and distribution.

"Utilita now has a great, modern head office, but we are starting to expand to other areas throughout the UK. Supporting a UK-wide business is hard and I need a company like Ricoh - and thankfully it is Ricoh - to allow me to focus on strategy. How can I cut costs, move services to different areas in the world, improve development and support, address better data management, resilience and security? I don't have the time to look at all the options and that's where working in partnership with Ricoh has really helped, they go off and do all the hard work, find out what's viable and cost-effective while I come up with the ideas."

Ricoh Solution/Products

- IT and business consultancy
- ITIL & business process auditing
- IT infrastructure
 - Development
 - Hardware & services
 - Implementation
- Networking & data centre
- Support Desk management
- Telephony & video conferencing
- Managed Print Service

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Phil Roberts, IT Director, Utilita Energy

