



Solution Case Study

Independent Living Group



ThinkGrid Limited, One Hardwick's Square, London, SW18 4AW

Tel: +44 (0) 203 393 7320 Fax: +44 (0) 203 393 7321 www.thinkgrid.co.uk

ThinkGrid Limited is registered in the United Kingdom, SC342546. ThinkGrid Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Telecom Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company registration number 5094837.

Introduction

The Independent Living Group (ILG), provide community-based care services across Hampshire, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent, delivering quality residential care and supported living opportunities for adults in friendly, personalised environments. ILG has more than 40 residential care homes across the South East region and is headed up by a highly experienced Executive Management Team.

A successful and rapidly growing organization providing a high quality of bespoke care services, ILG needed the IT services to be able to support their expanding operation but without burdening themselves with a cumbersome infrastructure or having an internal IT team to manage and maintain it. Adding to the complexity, ILG's end users are spread over an array of geographically disparate sites, making the ability to central manage and maintain their IT systems all the more important. ILG also rely on a key line-of-business application – namely Cold Harbour, specialist software for the care provider vertical market – delivered via Citrix.

Client Profile

Health Care Sector

100-500 Users Business

Multiple Locations

Client Drivers

Users Spread Over >40 Sites

Limited Internal IT Resources

Unreliable Existing
Deployment

Services Utilised

Hosted Virtual Desktops

Virtual Servers

Hosted Exchange 2007

The Challenge

ILG appointed Alex Korniak – a specialist IT Consultant with wide-ranging experience in the health-care vertical – to come up with a plan to address the number of IT problems they were facing. At the heart of these were questions of a disparate infrastructure, an unreliable existing system, a growing user base and little or no internal IT resources.

In Alex's words, "Whilst there's no doubting the role IT plays in improving the quality of the care we provide, it can still be a huge cost and management burden. In order to maintain ILG's high standards of care, it's critical to remain focused on delivering the best service possible to the people we support, which is why we have pursued an outsourced IT strategy that allows us to drive greater efficiency in our day-to-day operations".

"There was a lot to think about – different sites, different user profiles, local bandwidth provisions, delivering an already remote application and that was just for starters..."

Needing to come up with a plan that was future proofed to account for continuing growth, Alex began the process of trying to find a provider who could meet ILG's exacting needs, considering not just different providers but a number of different approaches, before deciding that ThinkGrid presented the most compelling offering. In his own words, "The challenge is that ILG has reached a size where for many similar businesses the obvious next step is to invest in an internal IT team to retain quality, whilst reducing outsourcing costs. So when the time came to review our existing IT services contract, we needed a partner who would be able to sustain our outsourcing strategy without compromise. I recommended ThinkGrid's cloud platform as it gives ILG the best of both worlds: high quality and affordable IT services."

ThinkGrid Limited, One Hardwick's Square, London, SW18 4AW

Tel: +44 (0) 203 393 7320 Fax: +44 (0) 203 393 7321 www.thinkgrid.co.uk

ThinkGrid Limited is registered in the United Kingdom, SC342546. ThinkGrid Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Telecom Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company registration number 5094837.

After ILG's Executive Board had carried out thorough due diligence and directly compared ThinkGrid's offerings to other alternatives, Alex was able to start drawing up a full solution design with ThinkGrid's technical team.

ThinkGrid's cloud platform gives ILG the best of both worlds: high quality and affordable IT services."

Given that ThinkGrid's Hosted Desktop solution needed to be rolled out to over 130 users, including a number of specific applications, the flexibility of deploying on a full virtualised (VDI) platform was key to the success of the deployment. As ThinkGrid Director of Engineering, Milovan Milic says, "In cases such as this, a one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't work. This wasn't a greenfield site, or a case of end users requiring just MS Office and Exchange, we were needing to migrate a significant number of desktops from a traditional solution into to the Cloud. What's more, we had to take ILG's existing applications with them, including one that was already being delivered remotely via Citrix. This is exactly why we deploy our Hosted Virtual Desktops on an individual, fully virtualised basis - anything else simply wouldn't have worked".

"We needed a complete offering – Hosted Desktops, Exchange, Active Directory permissions, a centralised File Server, server-based applications, multiple different user profiles - but have this delivered as a unified solution from a single provider."

Working in close harmony with Alex Korniak and Everlast, ILG's IT support company, ThinkGrid set about planning the desktop deployment – starting first with identifying different user profiles. Designing a solution that could meet the differing needs of ILG's staff members – from those preferring Office 2003 to 2007 for example, to those requiring access to certain key applications – Alex built a number of "golden images" for select user groups, which ThinkGrid were then able to template and roll out on mass from the control panel.

Milovan continues, "For larger desktop deployments, we want to save our partners the work of having to configure hundreds of desktops individually, yet we also want to avoid the limitations of only allowing customers a single, unalterable desktop build for all their users. The way we get round it – which we see as a best of both worlds' solution - is to template the configuration of specific, pre-designed desktops, which can then be rolled out in large numbers. When you add this to the fact that, as was the case with ILG, we can deploy a customer's Hosted Desktops with their own Active Directory structure, then you're looking at a solution that has all of the flexibility and control of an in-house deployment but none of the hassles".

The Services

The solution delivered to ILG effectively represents a complete, state-of-the-art IT infrastructure, but on a fully managed and completely flexible basis. As well as delivering Hosted Desktops to over 130 users, Alex Korniak and ThinkGrid also managed the smooth migration onto Hosted Exchange 2007, the transfer of all ILG's file data from onsite servers into secure, redundant, highly available virtual servers, and the delivery of a remote, third party application into ThinkGrid's Hosted Virtual Desktops.

The latter, delivered on a traditional Citrix basis, threw up some interesting challenges, but thanks to careful planning and a flexible platform, those challenges were overcome.

"It's another good example of the benefits of a true VDI solution", says Milovan Milic, "Where we needed

"Moving to ThinkGrid has been a quantum leap forward for us in terms of the quality of our IT services and the levels of expertise at the helm."

ThinkGrid Limited, One Hardwick's Square, London, SW18 4AW

Tel: +44 (0) 203 393 7320 Fax: +44 (0) 203 393 7321 www.thinkgrid.co.uk

ThinkGrid Limited is registered in the United Kingdom, SC342546. ThinkGrid Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Telecom Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company registration number 5094837.

to make tweaks to individual desktops to resolve minor niggles with individual applications or unusual printer drivers, we were able to do so without affecting the other 99% of users”.

Naturally, an extremely important element of the solution has been the internet connectivity. Given that the services are deployed to over 40 sites, connectivity upgrades had the potential to add a huge overhead to the project. However, the low bandwidth requirements of ThinkGrid’s Hosted Desktops – together with the fact that all computing now takes place on ILG’s hosted network in ThinkGrid’s data centres – meant that ILG didn’t have to upgrade a single existing internet connection, meaning even greater cost benefits.

To complete the piece, ILG use Everlast Systems, based in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire - a well established, IT services, support and maintenance company – to provide end user support to their staff.

“Everlast Systems provide ILG with great support and have been able to continue doing so without having ThinkGrid disrupt their business and practices.”

As ThinkGrid Account Director Paul Hillis says, “It’s a relationship that works really well. ILG are very happy with the level of service and support provided by Everlast, and behind the scenes we provide a bullet proof system to run the infrastructure so it’s simple for us to support the customer together and provide ILG with an end to end solution.”

However, one of the main benefits of moving to ThinkGrid’s Cloud platform, one that’s been enjoyed by both ILG and Everlast Systems, is that with ThinkGrid

delivering SLA-guaranteed availability and taking care of all system management and maintenance, end user support issues have plummeted since ILG moved to Hosted Virtual Desktops.

The Result

Carefully Planned Migration

Unified Platform, Single Provider

Scalable Services to meet growth

Utilises Existing Hardware and Connectivity

More than 40 sites Centrally Managed

Operational Costs, No Capital Expenditure

In the words of ThinkGrid Account Director, Paul Hillis, “I can honestly say that I’ve got a very happy customer. We have a fantastic relationship with ILG and that’s testimony to their progressive outlook and the quality of the services we provided. Putting together a deployment like this requires careful planning, but once deployed it very quickly beds in and becomes an almost invisible service. On one hand, ILG get first-class, always available IT and the peace of mind and confidence that comes with that, and on the other hand ourselves and Everlast Systems enjoy very low touch customer support. Because everything’s centrally managed and there’s no reliance on hardware spread across disparate sites, things just works, which is great for everyone”.

ThinkGrid Limited, One Hardwick’s Square, London, SW18 4AW

Tel: +44 (0) 203 393 7320 Fax: +44 (0) 203 393 7321 www.thinkgrid.co.uk

ThinkGrid Limited is registered in the United Kingdom, SC342546. ThinkGrid Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Telecom Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company registration number 5094837.

Similarly, Alex Korniak has been able to focus on other consultancy work and clients, without being burdened with having to worry about an existing implementation. “I do a lot of work with specialist software for the care industry and it’s great for me to know that I can rely on ThinkGrid to provide a flexible, state-of-the-art platform for these and other services to run on. I wouldn’t hesitate to use ThinkGrid again on other projects – in fact, it’s pretty hard to envisage a situation where clients wouldn’t be better off with ThinkGrid”.

“Let’s face it, there aren’t many businesses that wouldn’t rather pay for these services on a rolling monthly basis, and being able to add users as we grow means not paying for services we don’t need.”

ThinkGrid Limited, One Hardwick’s Square, London, SW18 4AW

Tel: +44 (0) 203 393 7320 **Fax: +44 (0) 203 393 7321** www.thinkgrid.co.uk

ThinkGrid Limited is registered in the United Kingdom, SC342546. ThinkGrid Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Telecom Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company registration number 5094837.

Contact

If you'd like to learn more about ThinkGrid's services, please feel free to call us on 020 3393 7370, email us at sales@thinkgrid.com or visit our website at www.thinkgrid.com

If you'd like to learn more about our partner Everlast Systems services and support, you can reach them on 0845 2000 512 or visit their website at www.everlastsystems.co.uk

