

Case Study: Guardian News and Media



Strategic Partnership Enables Collaborative Working Environment at Guardian News & Media

Guardian News & Media (GNM) is the publisher of the Guardian, The Observer, Guardian Weekly, guardian.co.uk and guardiannews.com. It is the core business of Guardian Media Group and is wholly owned by The Scott Trust Ltd, which secures the financial and editorial independence of the Guardian.

The Challenge

To find a trusted managed service partner with the capabilities to collaborate on strategic IT projects and deliver a 24/7 service management wrap, including the design, implementation & management of a large-scale network infrastructure for GNM's new headquarters and an international office launch.

The Solution

The design, integration and ongoing management of the WAN, MAN, LAN and WLAN, built on Cisco architecture, at GNM Headquarters plus data centre co-location and IT services for GNM's New York branch office. The fully managed service provides round-the-clock monitoring of the infrastructure from Logicalis' Managed Service Centre in Slough.

Outcome

Successfully enabled re-location projects, delivering ongoing management under one SLA and creating a long-term strategic partnership that supports GNM business goals.

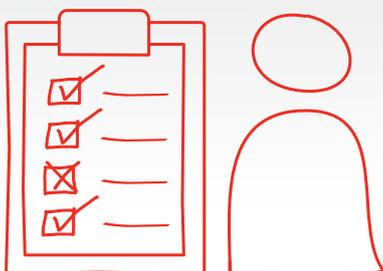
The Challenge

GNM first engaged with Logicalis UK on a virtualisation project in 2005. This project soon led to a long-term partnership that saw the design and implementation of a new multi-faceted IT environment for GNM and a fully managed service that is still in place today.

Logicalis led the design phase and supported the IT team in implementation and skills-transfer for the virtualisation project. Reducing over 200 physical servers down to just 12 with virtualisation, GNM realised multiple cost, efficiency and space savings.

So when in 2008, GNM looked to embark on a large-scale project to create a new collaborative working environment, it turned to Logicalis as a proven ICT services partner. Moving from three disparate office buildings in Farringdon to new premises at Kings Place, an integral part of the regeneration of the Kings Cross area, the forthcoming real-estate consolidation provided a focus for change.

For IT, the move offered a clean sheet of paper for GNM's IT infrastructure and the opportunity to build a top down architecture.



Liz Sarginson, Head of Digital Systems at GNM worked on the network project from the start. She commented: “The old set-up was quite disjointed. If you had a meeting in those days, you’d have to leave at least 10 minutes between them, as everyone was in different buildings. Of course, we had a network that had grown organically to match. With the office move, we were faced with a wonderful greenfield site that would enable us to build the network we wanted.

‘As anchor tenants of Kings Place, it was an enormous project. Not something to ask the business as usual team to be doing, we instead sought a prime contractor that could work with us to make this happen.’

GNM went to tender for an ICT partner that had the integration skills, vendor relationships and round-the clock service management capabilities needed to support the move. Sarginson commented, “Our own 24/7 support had always been ‘best endeavours’. We wanted to find an ICT partner that would not only take a design-led approach to the network itself, but who could provide that guarantee around always-on services moving forward.”

On a thorough evaluation of the marketplace, GNM found that Logicalis, with Cisco as the foundation of its architectural approach, proved most compelling and awarded Logicalis the seven-year contract which encompassed data centre hosting, WAN and MAN provision and Network Managed Services.

Sarginson explained, “It was the right technology platform, combined with the relationship we knew we could build with Logicalis that made it the service choice. We weren’t simply looking for cost-effectiveness; we wanted a provider that would help support our business goals. Having worked with Logicalis in the past, we’d experienced their design skills and consultancy, and were confident they could deliver on what was to be a comprehensive and challenging networking project.”

“I don’t see Logicalis as an outsourcer or service provider, but a real partner that is aligned to our business needs.”

Steve Erskine, Guardian News and Media

The Solution

Logicalis was tasked with designing, building, integrating supporting and managing a multi-faceted IT environment including GMG’s WAN, MAN, LAN and WLAN for the greenfield site.

GNM operates two IT teams, supporting the enterprise (print) and digital (online) sides of the business. The infrastructure project supported both. Steve Erskine, the Technology Supplier Manager at GNM, commented on the project:

“Inevitably, with such a mammoth project, there were always going to be teething problems. Wireless was one at the start. Every time a police car went past, it would interfere with the signal. Logicalis worked closely with us to alleviate the issues quickly and get it fixed. That’s important to us; it’s what we like about working with Logicalis. This ethos still applies today, we continue to work collaboratively and that’s one of the key value-adds we get from the managed service relationship.”

The infrastructure was completed to enable successful migration into the new premises on time, with minimum disruption to business operations. Erskine continued, “From facing an empty shell with hard hats and road diggers, together with Logicalis we achieved something significant with this project - we were on time and enabled the new environment for GNM.”

Logicalis has provided ongoing management, support services and maintenance for the network since the go-live date. The fully managed service is inclusive of data centre co-location and provides round-the-clock remote monitoring of the infrastructure from its own Managed Service Centre in Slough. The service, all provisioned under one Service Level Agreement (SLA), has provided GNM with a single point of contact for 24x7 enterprise performance management of its infrastructure.

Since the network implementation, the partnership has continued to flourish, evolving over the life of the managed services contract. “We’ve built a strong relationship; they understand our business and focus on adding value. So when new initiatives come along, such as the US office launch in 2011, we trust Logicalis to deliver,” said Erskine.

The US was an obvious expansion for GNM. Online readership in North America had grown organically and successfully, so to actively open up the new market GNM chose to launch a local office to bring American news with a Guardian slant.

Logicalis worked with GNM to design, build and implement the network in New York. Extending the managed service, this included provisioning the Cisco infrastructure, connecting the WAN via an MPLS link and providing management and remote monitoring in line with the existing services contract.

“There were many unforeseen challenges to overcome in this particular project - from changing timelines to supplier strikes, beyond anyone’s control,” explained Erskine “Logicalis were committed and worked with us to very tight deadlines, driving negotiations and seeking solutions that made sure the end-goal was delivered. For me, that’s the benefit of having this long-term partnership. If we’d gone with a supplier that we hadn’t had this relationship and understanding with, we would not have met the deadline I’m sure.”

The Outcome

Erskine commented, “ICT is a critical business facility for us. Both enterprise and digital rely on the infrastructure to operate, and ultimately deliver the quality of service to our customers that they’ve come to expect. From the outset it was made clear to Logicalis that in 192 years the Guardian has never missed a daily print run. And that is still the case!”

“I’ve continue to be impressed with Logicalis’ service levels and their flexibility is so refreshing. As the business evolves, so do our IT needs and Logicalis consistently adapt with us.”

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Where a dispersed, organic network resulted in regular outages and user frustration at GNM’s former UK premises - outages are now almost non-existent. Both the King’s Cross infrastructure and New York launch, succeeded as business enablers; migrating operations to new premises and supporting a more collaborative environment.

The managed service has continued under high-level SLAs with most recent projects including a refresh of the UK infrastructure as it reached end of life. Logicalis has been pivotal in supporting the implementation of GNM’s new Cisco UCS data centre infrastructure.

The objective for GNM moving forward is driving industry best practice into its ICT. To this end, Logicalis is currently working with GNM to design templates for standardised, repeatable architectures, such as FlexPod, to enable this across the business. This work will be critical for GNM as it continues to evolve its services and expand with branch offices in international locations in the future.

Commenting on the partnership, Erskine concluded, “I’ve continue to be impressed with Logicalis’ service levels and their flexibility is so refreshing. As the business evolves, so do our IT needs and Logicalis consistently adapts with us. For example, we’ve realised that we don’t need as much co-location space as originally planned. Logicalis’ approach to providing flexibility within the contract to reduce commitment in this area and boost it in another is invaluable to us. Having one, attentive and consistent Account Manager, and support team, right from our initial engagement has been beneficial, and enables us to really collaborate. I don’t see Logicalis as an outsourcer or service provider, but a real partner that is aligned to the business needs of GNM.”

Summary:

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