



Your trusted provider for IT services

Leading Employment and Advice Specialist, EEF North West, promotes Willow Starcom to trusted advisor status for IT advice, support and installation.

EEF North West forms one of five of the regions within EEF Ltd, the UK's Manufacturers Organisation and leading advisor to thousands of manufacturing businesses across the UK, providing support and solutions from HR & legal issues, Health Safety Climate and Environment matters through training and development, business improvement, to representation, lobbying information and research.

The organisation has been in existence for over 125 years and over the past two years has undergone dramatic transition to unify products and services formerly provided by 9 regional associations into a clear and consistent solution set across the UK, now facilitated by 5 regions. EEF North West is one these regions covering the North West conurbation with offices in Liverpool, St Asaph in North Wales, Chorley, Preston, and the main data centre in Warrington. The region serves over 600 members and has 50 employees.

The Problem:

Stephen Calderbank is the Operations Manager of EEF Ltd, North West, who explains the IT philosophy. "As a pure service led organisation that promotes business best practices throughout our member community, we were looking for an IT partner with the same aspirations and values as our own. Our 50 staff were looking for IT support that spanned from infrastructure planning to configuring new laptops. Our previous supplier when reacting to our call-outs, had regularly failed to deliver on call out

times or resolve service problems, hence downtime had become an accepted part of the working day."

The Issues:

With exponential growth in both members, employees and resultant data on their network, EEF needed to seek an alternative supplier who could recommend and provide reliable systems to minimise downtime and guarantee backup, recovery and compliance across a stable and maintained network. The search began for a proactive IT company who could actively demonstrate and deliver upon a level of IT support and could also provide consultation relevant to the size of EEF whilst future proofing for growth.

The EEF Team invited local companies to tender including Willow Starcom. After eliminating some companies who fell short of demonstrating the required service levels, Willow Starcom were shortlisted due to their can-do flexible approach. Although not the largest company on the shortlist, Willow Starcom over a period of weeks impressed

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EEF with their jargon-free recommendations, clearly communicating how and why the solutions they proposed would work at EEF. Importantly, there was a clear meeting of minds when it came to working philosophy and value sets and Willow Starcom was able to demonstrate how their products and services could not only integrate within the EEF business model, but also supplement the growth of that business model by recommending and implementing new IT solutions and technologies.

Hence in Autumn 2008, Willow Starcom was appointed as the support contractor for IT to EEF North West. Almost immediately, Willow Starcom began to manage the IT infrastructure at EEF North West in the Glazebrook head office along with two branch locations in Wales and Liverpool. Willow Starcom quickly assumed all responsibility for Hardware & Software support for all internal systems (other than phone) and working alongside the EEF Operations Team, began providing consultative recommendations by investigating current IT systems and strategy.

The Willow Starcom Effect:

Results from the support contract were evident and impressive notes Stephen. "The knock-on effect of engaging with Willow Starcom was evident to both employees and members alike. Almost immediately we received a greater level of reliability across our systems using the configuration that Willow Starcom recommended. This has allowed us to facilitate proper backup and restoration of files as and when required."

The consultative recommendations for future growth from Willow Starcom have also been developed and embraced, with Willow Starcom implementing 'best of breed' solutions into EEF for new hardware and software projects. These include replacement and integration of a new e-mail system; remote access solution for remote users; implementation of a new backup solution; downtime avoidance through proactive monitoring of critical servers and the implementation of an anti-spam solution.

Both the support contracts and the consultative services are implemented under a full Service Level Agreement (SLA) with regular monthly reviews to check against progress and define future activities.

Stephen notes; "Although they operate under a defined SLA, Willow Starcom consistently over-delivers on service. For instance, when an internet connection has been lost; or if a critical server has gone down, the chaps at Willow Starcom have worked into the night and across the weekend so that business can resume as normal on the next working day."

He concludes: "The impact to the business having a trusted supplier like Willow Starcom working with us cannot be underestimated. We all sleep sounder knowing that they are behind us all the way."

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