

Case Study

Nigel Letts – BlueGrassComs

Cloud2Me Services:	Hosted Desktop
Sector:	Automotive/Sales
Date:	June 2015
Number of users:	60 (As of June 2015)



“The key to obtaining a Hosted Desktop solution that works for you, is the quality of the service provider”

Introduction

Bluegrasscoms is a leading automotive business consultancy and service provider. The company's unique insight into the aftersales market allows them to offer a range of sales-increasing services to vehicle manufacturers, repair centre networks and nationwide breakdown organisations. They do so by harnessing both modern technology and traditional customer service values.

Cloud2Me were initially contacted back in September 2013, by the Chief Financial Officer Nigel Letts and Chief Operations Office Matt Kane. They knew that their current IT system was not sufficient for their business, nor was it future proof for their rapidly expanding work-force.

Challenges Requiring Resolutions

Nigel explained at the time that the challenges that they were facing were:

- No suitable location on premise to operate in-house servers.
- There were no in-house support staff to maintain traditional IT systems.
- The need to implement an IT system, with minimal up-front capital expenditure.
- The centralisation of all business data.
- Possession of a standardised platform for all staff to use.
- Finding a system that could utilise existing PCs and network hardware.
- Operating on a system that could quickly and easily have resources added, as and when the workforce expands.
- Having a reliable service, with expert support personnel, that understood the way they worked and their business.

Collectively taking into consideration all of the above, BlueGrassComs knew they needed to take action to allow their business to grow, without being held back or exposing themselves to undue risk.

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The Proposed Solution

Having spent time speaking with BlueGrassComs and visiting them, we had gathered enough information to realise that a hosted desktop environment was the way forward. Nigel was already aware of all of the benefits that hosted desktops presented. Additionally to this, we explained where the hosted desktop coupled with Cloud2Me's expertise, could help address all of their challenge points:



➤ **No suitable location on premise to operate in-house servers.**

With hosted desktops there would no longer be a requirement to run servers in-house. The hosted desktop servers that customers operate on would be located in one of our two ultra-secure data centres, located in South London and Reading. This brought about great benefits, as there was no requirement to then find a suitable (expensive) habitat within the office!

➤ **There were no in-house support staff to maintain traditional IT systems.**

One of the huge benefits of moving IT services to a managed hosting provider is that the customer no longer needs IT staff or localised expensive IT support. Cloud2Me would become BlueGrassComs IT support, maintaining both the hosted services and the day to day user support queries that stemmed from the hosted IT environment.

➤ **The need to implement an IT system, with minimal up-front capital expenditure.**

One of the many drawbacks with running servers on site is the large cost associated with this, including the initial capital expenditure for equipment. However it is not only the equipment, but the cost of manpower putting this all together. All of which would take time and in some cases this can be a very lengthy procedure.

We explained to BlueGrassComs that we could have their hosted desktop solution up and running on the same day, with all data and migration work completed within 2 days.

➤ **Having a standardised platform for all staff to use.**

BlueGrassComs realised that as and when their workforce expanded, it was going to be increasingly important to standardise the user workstation for each staff member. Thankfully, a hosted desktop service allowed such standardisation. All users would run off the same servers, along with using the same applications and the same data (whilst BlueGrassComs could lock down specific applications and data for some sets of users, if they so desired).

➤ **Finding a system that could utilise existing PCs and network hardware.**

When BlueGrassComs first contacted us back in 2013 they were still very much in their infancy, however they already had around 15 staff members. At this point they had invested in a mixture of PCs and network items (printers, routers etc.), which they wanted to retain. Fortunately Cloud2Me's solution had the capability to utilise all of their existing hardware to maximum effect, resulting in there being no requirement for BlueGrassComs to purchase new equipment.

➤ **Centralising all business data.**

With a hosted desktop solution all of the business data is held centrally on virtual (hosted desktop) server/s, this is what all staff would log on to. Whilst data can still be moved on/off the server as and when required, for the most part it all stays located on the hosted server.

➤ **Operating on a system that could quickly and easily have resources added, as and when the workforce expands.**

Another disadvantage of having servers in-house is that they are not quick to scale with the workforce. For example, when first purchased servers are likely to be over-specified then further down the line end up under-specified. Added to this when a new server is required, it is never easy to configure! A managed hosting service allows customers to scale computing requirements up and down, as and when required. This not only increases productivity, it is also extremely cost effective.

➤ **Having a reliable service, with expert support personnel, that understood the way they worked and their business.**

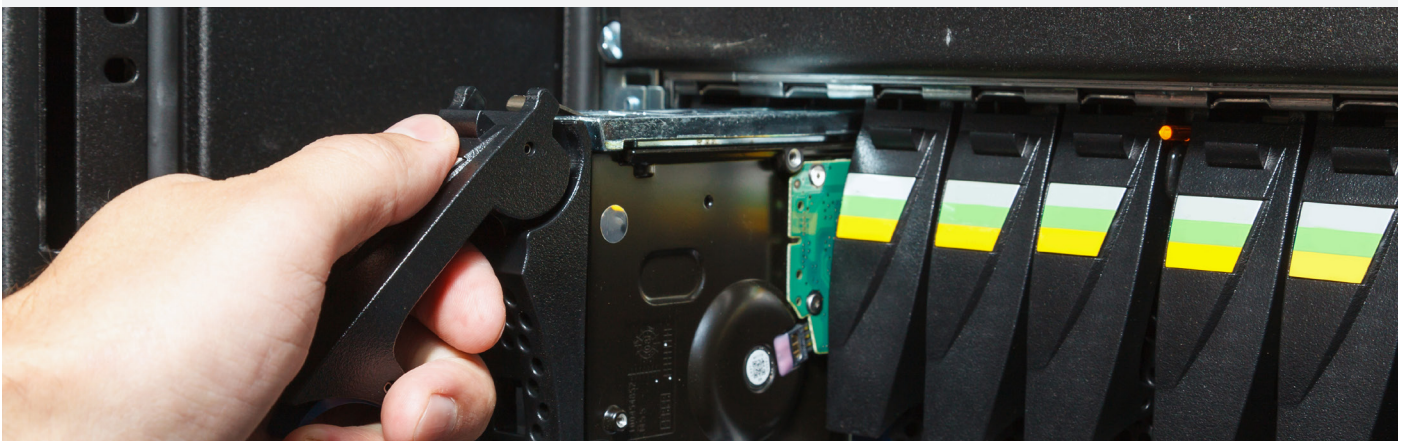
One of the concerns that BlueGrassComs had, which we regularly see with other customers, was that whilst they may receive good support initially, services levels soon tailed off. Cloud2Me being a smaller hosting company offer service and support that is on a far more personal level. Cloud2Me support staff familiarise themselves with every client individually, so they can offer prompt and tailored support as and when required. In addition Cloud2Me never hide behind ticketing systems, they are always contactable by telephone or email.

Concerns of Moving to a Hosted Service

The biggest concern that BlueGrassComs expressed was that were Cloud2Me going to be a dependable service provider for them? They were aware, particularly at that time back in 2013, that similar to them Cloud2Me were a relatively young business.

Our response to them back then was, that whilst being a small hosting provider we saw this as a distinct advantage and to be of great benefit to our clients. The service offered was timely and efficient, Cloud2Me could respond immediately to both their in-house and hosting market requirements. It also meant being a smaller company, Cloud2Me were far more dynamic in implementing service improvements as and when they presented themselves. Lastly we were extremely confident (as we still are!) knowing that the customer support we offered was second to none, especially in comparison to other larger hosting providers.

This was all over a year and a half ago and thus far our SLA to BlueGrassComs has far exceeded our 99.9% objective. BlueGrassComs initial concerns were all alleviated.



Migration and Implementation

As we do with all Hosted Desktop migrations, we initially created and then tested BlueGrassComs's hosted environment with them. This ensured that all applications (Skype, Sage Accounts, and Microsoft Office) performed as they should. We also performed an initial transfer of data in order that they could test the applications with their own data. The tests also included printing, scanning, logging on from all device types, remote working and performance testing. This test phase also ensured that staff could raise any problems prior to the "Go-Live" date, saving any potential downtime during business hours.

Consequently the go-live went very smoothly with the initial batch of users going on to the system.

Adjusting the Solution

BlueGrassComs went live successfully in October 2013 and over the course of the next 18 months they rapidly grew as a business. Accordingly Cloud2Me added additional hosted server resources to account for this growth.

However there then came a point where BlueGrassComs had such an increasing number of users on their hosted desktop server, there was a need to adjust the solution ahead of time. The reason for this is because there is a "glass ceiling" effect. There is only a limited amount of hosted desktop users that you can place on a single server, before you eventually begin to run out of computing resources.

We therefore built BlueGrassComs a new hosted desktop environment which spans multiple hosted desktop servers, we refer to this as a "farm". When users log on, they are evenly distributed to an available hosted desktop server therefore the load is shared, with eggs being split into multiple baskets. This solution allows users to continue receiving a lightning quick hosted desktop experience, whilst also allowing for BlueGrassComs to expand at a rapid rate – which they are doing!

Summary

From a business perspective BlueGrassComs have enjoyed tremendous success within their sector. They are a fine example of how, despite the financial crash of 2008, start-up businesses can still triumph in today's market.

We are immensely grateful that we have had the chance to observe their achievements from the beginning of what has been a very exciting journey. We are also proud to have had the chance to assist them thus far.

They are, as they always have been, a pleasure to deal with. You can always be sure that they keep us on our toes too, with the technical challenges that they have presented us with along the way!

According to Nigel, it appears that these sentiments are reciprocated;

"The key to getting a Hosted Desktop solution that works for you, is the quality of the service provider. We have found Cloud2Me always prepared to go that little bit farther, solving issues in a timely and professional manner - even when those issues were really beyond their remit!"

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