

Alpha Plus Group improves efficiency and enhances IT security with our managed services

Alpha Plus Group has improved operational efficiency and IT security since outsourcing the management of its IT infrastructure to us. By working with us for the past nine years, Alpha Plus managers have been able to focus on the organisation's strategy for growth.



Background

The Alpha Plus Group comprises of nineteen first-class independent schools, nurseries and sixth form colleges, located throughout the UK. The group was founded in 1931 as Davies Laing and Dick College. Turnover for the group (FY 2012) was £57.9 million, an increase of 10.7% on the previous year. It has grown by 62.2% over the last five years and now provides education for around 3,700 students.

We started working with Alpha Plus in 2004 when it was appointed to provide IT managed services. Due to dynamic growth, the Alpha Plus IT requirement has also increased, with IT security a key element, due to the need for communication of sensitive and confidential information around the group.

A successful partnership has been vital in enabling the company's rapid and on-going growth. Our relationship has evolved over the years to include the provision and management of a private cloud, infrastructure virtualisation and most recently, the deployment of unified communications solutions.

Success from desk-top to data centre

We provide everything from desktop PC (and peripheral) support through to managing and maintaining all servers, the Alpha Plus internal network and its wireless infrastructure.

We also manage Alpha Plus' two datacentres and private cloud, along with the storage area network infrastructure and high availability Microsoft Hyper V Cluster. First and second line support is provided for the Alpha Plus MPLS network.

Alpha Plus takes advantage of the full Microsoft stack, including Microsoft Exchange, SQL server and SharePoint platform, as well as a centralised Cisco Call Manager platform and disaster recovery services, which are handled by us.

Cloud Computing and Centralised IT Management

In 2011 Alpha Plus started to use a private cloud designed, deployed and supported by us. The solution is used to manage emails, databases, core data, backup and internet filtering.

Client >

Alpha Plus Group

Sector >

Education

Project >

Managed Services

"The Advanced system works very well. It is the only sensible way that an organisation like Alpha Plus can operate"

David Elliott >
Director of ICT >
Alpha Plus Group

Alpha Plus secure their data through private cloud

David Elliott, Director of ICT at Alpha Plus says, "The decision to implement our private cloud was largely based around security issues and the protected transfer of sensitive information around the group of schools and colleges. We wanted to ensure the security of our data and for this reason we chose to purchase the necessary physical hardware as opposed to leasing it."

As Alpha Plus data is permanently housed on-site, they still own the hardware and therefore a cleaner migration path.

David credits the managed services system with helping to free-up management hours. "I can focus on the strategic end of delivering IT to the organisation because I don't have to worry about staff management, as that is all arranged for me through the outsource."

The Advanced system works very well. It is the only sensible way that an organisation like Alpha Plus can operate. We opted for a private cloud, which enables us to manage the IT real estate for nineteen schools and colleges centrally from our head office in London. Interlinking them via multiple connections would be significantly more complex."

Having built the Alpha Plus private cloud, we continue to provide support by maintaining Alpha Plus' datacentre and internet connectivity. We also manage the relationship with Alpha Plus' internet service provider, Claranet.

Dedicated Managed Services

As part of the service we permanently station a team of ten engineers at Alpha Plus. These technicians work between the organisation's schools and colleges on a rota basis. They are headed by one of our senior engineers (who works closely with David); the team is dedicated to supporting Alpha Plus and is conversant with every aspect of the technology the organisation relies on.

David says, "An important part of the managed services is to choose a quality provider. We have developed a strong relationship with our dedicated team over the last five years and the engineers are excellent – this gives us peace of mind for all our IT needs and enables me to focus on the bigger strategy. The engineers know our sites and our needs and our staff, teachers and heads know them, which is very important."

Our engineers are supported by extended teams of first, second and third line support engineers, solutions architects, PRINCE2-qualified project managers and technical senior management based at our Network Operations Centre in London.

Further growth for Alpha Plus Group

Alpha Plus owns and operates twelve independent schools, two nurseries and five sixth-form colleges. The company is constantly looking to acquire and establish new schools to add to its existing portfolio.

A robust unified communications structure, integrated into its existing trustworthy IT system, is a key element to Alpha Plus' ambitious vision for the future. The organisation's UC development will enable them to reduce call charges by 30% and will significantly improve internal and external communications.

Alpha Plus is looking to implement Skype for Business which will enable employees to connect on various devices, enabling them to be more productive. Once Skype is fully operational, staff between the schools and colleges will be able to use instant messaging, voice, and video.

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David Elliott >
Director of ICT >
Alpha Plus Group

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