



Providing Reliability and Resiliency for Leading North West Accountancy Practice

Technology specialists C24 provide resilient and available enterprise IT infrastructure for Stockport based Hurst Accountants.

Introduction

Hurst Accountants are a leading regional accountancy firm, employing nearly 80 staff across their Manchester and Stockport office locations. Working exclusively with owner-managed businesses, Hurst Accountants specialise in a select number of key sectors to provide unique expertise to their client base. With business growth of nearly 15% each year, Hurst Accountants are striving to reach their goal of being one of the North West's most prominent accountancy practices.

Aligning business and IT objectives

As a growing accountancy practice with ambitious growth objectives, Hurst required a more reliable and resilient IT environment to support their business activities.

Across accountancy firms today, technology is prevalent at all stages of the customer lifecycle; from how clients find the accountancy practice via the web, through to uploading files and documentation online and downloading their accountant's output information via online portals. This means that accountancy firms need to have resilient IT solutions in place to help them not only service clients today, but continue to scale and expand to service clients in the future.

Making IT 'business-ready'

Previously, the IT solution in place had grown with the business; with new hardware and software being gradually added to a legacy infrastructure. Hurst recognised this was unsustainable in the long term and started investigating options to secure their business operations for the future. As a business that is heavily reliant on IT to provide its service, Hurst was concerned that due to the age of the legacy server estate, if one server was affected by an outage then it could bring down other servers; resulting in downtime within the business.

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PARTNER CASE STUDY



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Company:

HURST
UNLIKE ANY OTHER ACCOUNTANT

Industry:

Accountants

Location:

82 King Street,
Manchester M2 4WQ

Developing a solution for the future

After initially considering a cloud solution, Hurst decided that due to the sensitive nature of the data they handled as an accountancy practice, they would feel more comfortable implementing a private cloud infrastructure within their own datacentre so that they could manage the data protection process end to end. This would also mean that if they decided in the future to move to the cloud, they were in a 'cloud-ready' position through their use of industry standard technology platforms.

Finance Director at Hurst Accountants, Narendra Mistry, highlighted, *"As a business that is often pitching against the UK's top four accountancy firms, we are very selective about the clients we work with and, as such, our skill set is very specialised. One of the factors that increases our chances of success in attracting clients is the ability to harness technology in a way that delivers better outcomes for our clients. That could be as simple as having IT systems in place that allow us to respond quickly to our clients, or by utilising industry software and cloud technology to enable clients to engage with us via online portals. Every minute of the working day, we are reliant on technology, so it is critical that we have the right solution in place."*

Working with C24

Hurst had previously worked with some of the C24 team and were confident in their ability to undertake organisation-wide IT transformation projects. When evaluating suppliers, Hurst felt that C24's range of experienced technical teams and support staff to work on their particular project differentiated C24 from other IT providers.

Risk mitigation was an important factor in choosing a supplier, as a disruption to the IT systems could negatively impact upon Hurst's ability to carry out client work.

Working with C24 as a partner

A critical factor in choosing to work with C24, was Hurst's focus on building a partnership with an IT provider, rather than a typical supplier-buyer relationship. This has led to C24 sponsoring Hurst's acclaimed Budget Live events and client roundtable presentations.

Furthermore, Hurst have even been so pleased with the C24 service delivery that they have recommended them to their own clients, resulting in C24 working with a prominent Manchester based law firm and an IFA wealth management firm.

Hurst now see C24's support consultants as an extension of their own team, as the C24 specialists support Hurst with proactive issue monitoring services and remote access support for any problems.



Designing resiliency and reliability into the solution

To deliver the resilient and future-proof solution that Hurst required, C24 designed a flexible IT infrastructure, based on HP servers and HP P4000 storage with VMware virtualisation technology. This primary environment was then replicated to a disaster recovery server at a separate site, with snapshots being sent from the primary site to the DR site every four hours. C24 also implemented a solution to enable an automatic failover in the event of a problem at the primary site, with a recovery time of 2 hours to minimise disruption to the business. This meant that Hurst could now enjoy a resilient infrastructure without the worry of downtime or loss of data in the event of an unexpected outage.

The solution was implemented over a weekend, meaning that when business users returned to work on Monday morning, they weren't faced with any issues logging on, and no hours were lost whilst the systems were migrated over to the new infrastructure. This enabled Hurst's IT team to switch over the IT systems and get the practice back to business with no disruption to operations.

Delivering sustainable business outcomes

Now that the solution is in place, the IT team is much more confident of their ability to deliver a reliable and available service back to the business. Because of the way C24 has designed the solution for Hurst, an individual server could face an outage and not cause other servers to fail, which would have happened within the previous legacy environment. Additionally, the applications and systems within the firm are now functioning quicker and the number of user complaints about lagging applications has reduced significantly.

As Narendra Mistry, Finance Director at Hurst Accountants, commented, *"Nowadays, it is a given that technology just works – and since implementing the new systems, our users haven't complained – showing the IT department that the solution is working correctly and delivering value back to the business. More importantly, having a resilient IT infrastructure gives us the confidence that we can reliably deliver our services to clients without the fear of downtime."*

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Narendra Mistry, Finance Director at Hurst Accountants



For more information about C24, visit www.c24.co.uk or call 0121 550 4569. Alternatively follow us at the C24 blog, on twitter and LinkedIn.

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