

Jisc consultancy helps ucisa achieve fully portable cloud IT

Jisc customer: ucisa, the member-led professional body for digital practitioners in education

Challenge: Moving to portable, 'work-anywhere' IT infrastructure

Solution: Jisc cloud professional services, cloud managed services and managed IT support service.

Benefits: Strategic flexibility and business continuity

As the professional body for digital practitioners in education, ucisa needs an agile IT infrastructure – so it can adapt flexibly to meet the needs of members, wherever its staff happen to be.

At the same time, because of its role in bringing together the sector's digital expertise, it's also important that it demonstrates best practice in IT.

So, as ucisa planned a 2019 move away from University of Oxford premises to offices in Harwell, Oxfordshire – a move which meant ucisa took direct control of its own administration – CEO Deborah Green decided to look for a provider to plan and implement a new, more flexible IT infrastructure.

"I wanted to work with a provider who would understand what our systems were, what needed to move over, and how to move in the most cost-effective and efficient way," she explains.

Timescales were also challenging, as an office move was due to take place in a matter of months – and value for money was naturally important.

The solution: professional services from Jisc's cloud experts

The answer to the problem was professional and cost-effective cloud consultancy from Jisc.

"We selected Jisc because they were able to talk to us in straightforward language, making things understandable for senior managers," says Deborah. "They understood our timescales, and were not fazed; they were able to clarify issues and explain to us what needed to be done."

Jisc's role in the research and education sector was a plus. *"It's nice to support an organisation which ultimately supports our sector."*

So Jisc's cloud solutions team worked to migrate ucisa's systems to Microsoft's public cloud infrastructure, using both Azure and Office 365. The migration meant that ucisa now used public cloud infrastructure for email, membership application, accountancy and web domain services.

After the cloud migration, ucisa chose Jisc managed IT services to provide IT support. Services included user support; device management; SharePoint intranet and storage; telephony; and collaboration tools. After bedding in, multi-factor authentication (MFA) was deployed to provide a highly resilient and secure operating environment for ucisa staff and stakeholders.

Benefits of dealing with Jisc: good communication from the start

A key benefit of dealing with Jisc, says Deborah, was good communication from the start – which helped the migration go smoothly.

“Jisc showed attention to detail,” she says. “We were dependent on a number of existing technology suppliers, and new suppliers for infrastructure – and Jisc were skilled at tying up loose ends, working with stakeholders and managing the interdependencies of the system.”

Deadlines were met – despite there being “no room for slippage” in the timetable – and the new office was up and running by lunchtime on day one with no loss of business continuity. “Jisc have a calm about them,” Deborah explains. “They understood timescales were tight, but they presented constructive solutions.”

Where there were teething problems in migrating older systems, Jisc have showed willingness to solve them within the agreed fee, Deborah explains. “There was no deviation from the initial contract price, and it was good value for money.”

Business benefit of migration: flexibility and business continuity

The central benefit of ucisa’s public cloud infrastructure is business flexibility: and that flexibility was quickly put to the test when the UK went into a Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020.

“It was only a few months after our move that Covid struck,” says Deborah. “This meant that our business continuity was tested: we hadn’t even settled into our new home by the time we had to move out of it.”

Yet on the morning of lockdown, ucisa was able to move out of its office in a matter of hours.

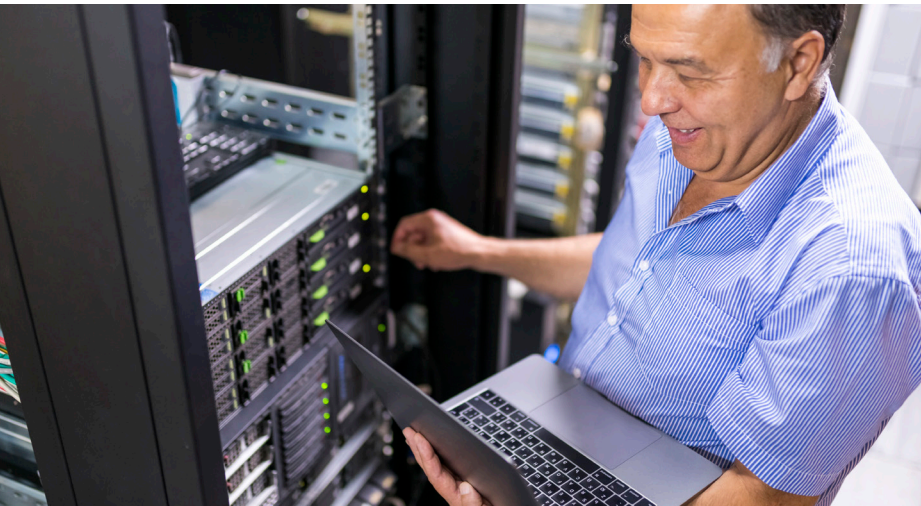
“We were able to move to working from home with just a few business hours’ notice,” Deborah says. “We went into the office at 9am, were out by 1pm and fully operational remotely that afternoon. That’s testament to the systems we had in place.”

At time of writing, Jisc continue to provide a managed service and ucisa operates wholly remotely. “So successful has it been that we’re now considering whether we need physical office space as we previously did,” she adds.

Lessons for the future

Deborah says that the experience has confirmed to her the importance of communication to a successful project.

“We set high standards and Jisc were able to meet those,” she says. “I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend them to others and have done so since.”



To find out more about Jisc’s cloud consultancy, please:



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email: <https://ji.sc/ContactAM>



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