

Irish Distillers gets into the cloud spirit

Every whiskey drinker knows the Jameson brand, and the label's tremendous growth means that all parts of the Irish Distillers organisation must keep pace. The infrastructure team has played its part: by transforming the way technology supports the organisation, including adopting a private cloud model, it's now delivering reduced costs, strengthened IT security and improved application reliability right across the enterprise.

With six sites including locations in Belfast, Cork and Dublin, Irish Distillers was like many companies before its IT transformation program: its systems and servers were distributed across the country, but the network bandwidth and quality hadn't kept up with the data demands of its users.

"We had key systems in a data centre in Dublin and had decided to replicate everything in real time over to our headquarters in Ballsbridge, because our existing disaster recovery arrangements had to be strengthened," recalls David Ryan, IT Infrastructure Manager for Irish Distillers. "That was a key driver for the IT transformation program. Establishing the hot site had shown us how cost-effective high-capacity bandwidth had become. We wanted to start using the network to consolidate and virtualise our server estate, rollout cloud-based applications for all our offices and deliver a wide range of services we couldn't do in the past: like file archiving, quick online backups and really reliable IP voice services."

Before it could transform its IT, it had to transform its network. AirSpeed Telecom had provided the bandwidth for the hot site, and a conversation with AirSpeed led to the design of a brand-new 100Mb per second multisite network for Irish Distillers' six locations, based primarily on licensed wireless.

Today the infrastructure underlying the Irish Distillers operation – including its bottling and distribution centre, distillery and tourism-focused whiskey heritage centre – is unrecognisable from the hard-to-maintain infrastructure it has replaced:

20 X bandwidth boost

From its previous 512 Kbps connections, all Irish Distillers sites have jumped to 100Mbps, supporting faster, more responsive performance for business applications.

Virtualisation cuts costs

A server virtualisation program, facilitated by a 100Mbps link from Irish Distillers' headquarters to its data centre, has reduced 20 servers down to just four, delivering significant savings in equipment purchase, monitoring and maintenance.

Better IT service levels, less IT manpower with the cloud

Moving remote offices' IT function to the data centre and virtualising the platform has decreased the IT manpower needed to maintain the platform, freeing up time for strategic tasks. A private cloud-based infrastructure delivers uniform, high-speed access to essential applications for every Irish Distillers site, including an upgraded CRM system with enhanced functionality.



Reliability is noticeably better

Users report better performance from mission-critical applications, including internal voice over IP services. "We had previously run our internal voice calls over IP, but not very well – there were bottlenecks that impacted quality," David said. "There are no issues at all now."

Business resilience transformed

The IT environment is now replicated in real-time across two separate sites, which delivers a major leap forward in the company's business resilience.

A service partnership that keeps pace with Irish Distillers' needs

David said the robust new infrastructure has positioned the company to compete better in its market, and keep its costs controlled.

"It means a great deal to the enterprise that we've totally eliminated any problems with power outages – everything is in the data centre now, in a good clean environment that guarantees us better uptime on our applications."

With so much now relying on the network, he says the reliability and responsiveness of partners like AirSpeed Telecom are critical.

"There are huge pressures on IT to be dynamic, and what we really value from AirSpeed isn't just that the bandwidth they give us is less expensive than we were paying before, it's their reliability, and their ability to turn around installations very quickly,"

David said.

"Our whole network upgrade was done in three weeks; that could've taken our previous providers eight weeks. Our infrastructure team has to be able to say yes to the business quickly when they need changes. If you're in the middle of a project and have to wait for a telecoms provider, delivery timelines start to slide. We need reliability, quick response and value for money, and we are getting all three from AirSpeed."