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Leo Pickford, IT Manager - ArchitecturePLB

Rubicon helps architect practice evolve their IT infrastructure

ArchitecturePLB is a design-led practice with offices in Winchester and London. Currently employing around 60 people, they have a diverse portfolio and specialise in innovative design solutions and buildings that enrich the lives of the people who use them.

Winner of the Architects' Journal Employer of the Year award two years running, their team of creative individuals is key to the success of the practice and the service they offer their clients.

Perfect fit IT support

As an existing Business-PRO customer, ArchitecturePLB and Rubicon had an established working relationship. Outsourcing to Rubicon's managed services had been a natural development of the customer/supplier dynamic that arose due to an internal review of ArchitecturePLB's existing in-house IT support and how it was being delivered.

Leo Pickford, IT Manager at ArchitecturePLB, chose Rubicon to handle the company's managed service because they understood the company ethos and culture and were already relied upon as trusted advisors.

Leo commented: "From a commercial strategic planning point of view they were a perfect fit. Rubicon was on the same page from day one and that's what we needed. And on a personal level they are brilliant people to work with."

Rubicon currently provide reactive and proactive support, allowing Leo to focus on strategy and implementation processes and without the day to day overhead of background IT.

An evolving IT infrastructure

When looking at the long-term IT strategy for the company, Leo wanted to make futureproof and cost-effective choices for the business.

With 60 designers all working on Macs it was important to support and maintain that environment. However, it was becoming increasingly apparent that a change in back end infrastructure would enable the company to evolve and keep pace with a fast and competitive industry.

When he had first worked with Rubicon, it was because of their experience with Mac servers, so when it came to moving Macs into a Windows environment Leo naturally looked to Rubicon for answers and a way forward.

Leo commented: "I didn't want to go to a company that had a long track record with Windows. Rubicon and I were in a similar boat as we both came from a Mac background and that's how the relationship formed. They understood my pain, knew where I was coming from, and where I wanted to take the business."

Creating cross-platform solutions

Key to Rubicon's solution was a cross-platform management system to support ArchitecturePLB's Mac-focussed environment.

A Windows Domain Controller was installed and using Azure Connect all users were synced easily to Office 365. Microsoft Azure with Office 365 was chosen above other solutions for its secure road map and compliance capabilities.

Rubicon managed the migration of historical email from the existing mail server and oversaw the setup up of workstations, all the time avoiding any downtime of mail services.

As Architectural practices are required to keep all documentation surrounding a project for up to 12 years, Rubicon project managed the migration of email archives from several historical systems and moved them into an easy-use cloud-based solution from Sonian.

To provide business continuity a virtualised server solution was installed in the London office. To ensure users didn't notice any change to their IT environment Acronis Access Connect was used to provide the best file sharing experience to the Mac workstations.

Next steps for Architecture PLB

Central to ArchitecturePLB's IT strategy is the ability to be able to manage servers from any location, giving them flexibility and futureproofing. To achieve this the remaining servers at Winchester will be migrated onto a virtualised platform powered by VMWare.

Tied in with this is their back-up, business continuity and disaster recovery plan meaning that should they lose one office, they can continue to work at another - which was never possible before.

An ongoing, profitable relationship

The relationship between Architecture PLB and Rubicon is one based on trust. They have worked on both high and low-level projects and from Leo's point of view, this has resulted in huge time and cost savings across the business

As things change quickly in IT, Leo used to do a lot of product research to try and stay current. Now he relies on Rubicon for this information and it has saved him vast amounts of time.

"Rubicon sales and tech staff are so good, they're my one stop shop for all presales information; they're all really well informed and will challenge me and say 'are you sure you're looking at the right product, this might be better'. The quality of people they employ is a credit to Rubicon. I take them for granted, but by engaging the right people for the right job, they make my life so much easier."

For Leo, it's Rubicon's attention to detail - a trait that's vital in the architectural space - that sets them apart from other IT providers. This meticulous approach is crucial when working with designers and architects.

"I have recommended Rubicon to other companies and will continue to do so. I know they will always do a good job and work to their best ability."

Rubicon Services Used

- Business-PRO -
  Proactive Managed Support
- Pre-Sales Consultancy
- Project Management
- Onsite Installation and Configuration
- Email Migration
- Email Archive Migration

Hardware & Software

- VMWare vSphere
- Veeam Backup & Replication
- Microsoft Windows Server 2012 Essentials
- Acronis Access Connect
- DELL R730 Series servers

Cloud Services

- Microsoft Office 365
- Sonian Email Archive