



Case Study

TUC

AdEPT helps the UK's largest trade union federation transform its technology to support its mission to make working life better for its staff and for everyone.

Overview

Due to the pandemic, flexible working has captured the public's attention, stoking fierce debate about conventional working practices and even the possibility of a four-day working week. But this topic long predates Covid-19, with one example of this being the Flex for All campaign, launched in 2019.

Among the many organisations supporting this campaign is the Trades Union Congress (the TUC), which not only represents 48 affiliate trade unions and 5.5 million working people, but also advocates flexible working for its employees, too.

One way the TUC is making this happen for its staff is through the better use of ICT. And so, over the past six years, Virtual CIO Simon Parry has led the transformation of the organisation's technology, which in 2021 began a new partnership between the TUC and AdEPT.

In this case study, Simon describes how AdEPT – primarily through its Nebula solution – is helping the TUC modernise its technology to support both its employees and its mission to make working life better for people everywhere.

Situation

Despite having a huge voice, the TUC does not have an enormous ICT budget. Consequently, when Simon joined the organisation in autumn 2016, an immediate focus was to streamline the TUC's ICT infrastructure – to reduce inefficiencies; simplify supplier management; and improve connectivity, security, and resilience.

“The situation with various contracts and infrastructure meant we were ripe for a ‘Big Bang,’” explains Simon. “And we got straight onto the work.”

“We needed to make some changes. So to make the process easier, we set up a technology steering group of both ICT staff and users so that everybody could contribute from the outset.”

With his economics and information management background, Simon believes real transformation goes far beyond technology.

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“In transformation projects, it's vital to help staff adapt to changes and shift the culture so they are not intimidated by new ICT,” he says. “That means accepting experimentation and that mistakes are part of learning, growing and ultimately getting better.”

By early 2020, many TUC systems had been moved to the cloud. And at the same time, some of its ICT contracts were ending, so it invited suppliers to tender, to which AdEPT responded. But with the arrival of the first lockdown and mounting concerns about the pandemic, the organisation decided to extend its existing ICT contracts for a year, shortlisting the bidders it wanted to return to in the future, including AdEPT.





Solution



Fortunately, the transformation work that Simon had led from 2016 meant that adapting to home and remote working during the pandemic was relatively straightforward for the TUC. But there was still more work to be done to simplify the TUC's systems and improve their resilience. And it is why AdEPT's proprietary platform, Nebula, proved to be so attractive.

At the heart of Nebula is a 'thread' of network communications, to which other services can be added – such as firewalls, hosted software, and voice systems. It can also coexist with other applications – whether from on-site servers or the public cloud – and can reduce costs by providing a range of competing options from AdEPT partners. At the same time, running from multiple data centres, Nebula provides all-important resilience, helping organisations with their disaster recovery and business

continuity objectives.

"Nebula really is a unique selling point," says Simon. "It is resilient by design – it's built in – so the economies of the system work well. It's a cost-effective system because this resilience isn't a secondary afterthought – and of course, being a not-for-profit organisation, being sensitive to costs is vital."

As with any tendering process, both the TUC and AdEPT recognise that it's impossible to tick every box – but the people involved from the outset can make all the difference.

"When we first put out the call to tender in 2020, one of the things that AdEPT didn't score so highly on was Skype for Business, which we'd been using," says Simon. "But a year later, and having migrated to Microsoft Teams, that was no longer an issue.

"In any case, not only were we impressed with Nebula, but we were also impressed with the people, too, in particular Alex Price. He helped design Nebula, so we could ask him the most technical of questions about the system from the start – it was clear he really knows his stuff."

With contracts signed in March 2021, work started immediately, and in spite of the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

"The project management from Rik Walter was excellent from the outset – with good planning, good communication, and being upfront and early if something's going wrong," says Simon. "We had project managers with other suppliers in the past, and the difference with AdEPT is like chalk and cheese."





“There were some blips along the way – largely due to Covid and around network connections, like trying to get wires fitted - but we had contingency plans in place.”

By July 2021, with scoping, planning and setup work complete, it was time to make the switchover from the TUC’s servers to Nebula – no small undertaking – but staff continuity helped the work and the relationship grow from strength to strength.

“The whole process went very well,” says Simon. “In fact, we insisted on Alex Price being involved as he impressed us so much in the interview – he did a really good job of migrating things across, getting the filing system in place and doing the testing.”

By the end of the summer and the big switch complete, it was time to move from a project management phase to ongoing support, offering valuable lessons for AdEPT and the TUC.

“I think sometimes, some companies give their account and project managers too many clients or projects

– therefore, they’re not able to deliver well,” says Simon. “One thing I really like about AdEPT is its size – it’s big enough to have the expertise but small enough for people across departments to know each other well, which means they work together effectively, people get back to you and information is properly shared.”

Delivered on time and within budget, the project and subsequent support has helped, and continues to help, the TUC streamline and strengthen its ICT.

It means the organisation benefits from more resilient and cost-effective ICT – and its employees benefit from technology that performs more reliably, whether working on-site or from home, and is more adaptive to change, allowing for more flexible work. Ultimately, at a time when working life is facing immense and unsettling change, all of these benefits will help in all the TUC does to improve the working lives for the people of the UK.

AdEPT supports the TUC in the following areas. If you have any questions, get in touch through the details below

- WAN connectivity across 6 sites
- Teams telephony solution
- Third-line infrastructure support
- Microsoft 365 backup
- Microsoft 365 licensing
- Microsoft Windows Defender
- Server backup
- Remote desktop (RDS) hosting for finance software
- Network upgrades and refreshes
- LAN infrastructure refresh

To find out more about TUC or to join a union, visit

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/>

Get in touch

For more information on any of our services or to talk about how we may be able to help you, please get in touch with us using the details below.



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