

nsaTax fixes IT cost headache



Swapping the uncertainty and variability of IT support expenses with 100% predictable costs and unlimited support hours was a 'no-brainer' for nsaTax...

Subject matter experts, nsaTax provide a comprehensive range of taxation and trusts related services and advice to clients in New Zealand and internationally.

In addition to a substantial team of human resources, nsaTax rely heavily on a set of advanced IT resources that support literally every aspect of their business.

Says Phil Bell, Director of nsaTax, "We operate a state of the art paperless office system implemented by Convergence. We rely heavily on this system for storage of client related material crucial to our consulting engagements, to access precedent

documents, and for the speedy recovery of historical advice, which we regularly are required to do. The paperless office system also has a job management module whereby all matters/jobs are given a unique number enabling all documentation relating to that job to be electronically filed in the one place, making recovery and review of those documents quick and easy. Other aspects of our business such as administration, billing, seminars, accounting and management also rely on IT."

nsaTax is a professional services business and any disruption of its IT systems would almost immediately adversely affect income. "As tax

consultants, we generally charge on an hourly basis. If our staff isn't productive due to inaccessible or slow computer systems, it costs us significantly. The firm could probably cope for around half a day or, at a stretch, a full day without access to systems and documents but beyond that we are losing money at a significant rate of knots. Hence, it is extremely important to us to have a reliable, quality IT support provider on our team," says Bell.

Convergence has been a long-term IT services provider to nsaTax and over the years different models for the provision of support services have been in place. While nsaTax were always happy with the service they received from Convergence – evident in the 10-year history the companies share – it was a 'no-brainer' for them to move to the new fixed fee, unlimited hours 'Peace of Mind' support plan.

Previous plans included a set number of hours per month for a fee and extra charges for additional support needed, as is commonly the case. This meant time-consuming monthly reconciliation of IT support bills against time sheets, which sometimes resulted in discussions about whether something should have taken as long as it did.

nsaTax found that these models suffer from conflicting objectives. The client wants their IT systems to perform with minimal disruption and at minimal cost while the IT support provider wants to maximize their income by spending as much time as they can get away with.

The variable element in such regimes leads to unpredictable monthly IT support expenses, which generally does not result in happy relationships.

"A Convergence peace of mind support plan aligns our client's objectives with ours, effectively putting us on the same side of the table in a true partnership," says Mark Presnell, CEO of Convergence. "We are both interested in keeping IT systems going with minimal disruption. To this end, our plans don't just focus on 'break-fix' but also include SLAs [Service Level Agreements], remote monitoring, regular pro-active health-checks as well as strategic planning sessions to ensure our client's IT systems can support the growth they are forecasting at optimal cost," says Presnell.

nsaTax knows that the initial purchase price of any piece of IT equipment or software is usually only a fraction of the total cost of ownership (TCO). To minimize TCO, systems need to be maintained and serviced with the intention of keeping them running at optimal levels with minimal disruption.

Phil Bell explains, "The plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure both parties are happy

with the arrangement. We are not locked into a long-term contract, which we found very refreshing. The support plan can also be adjusted when the need arises. For example, recently our in-house IT liaison person, Nicki, had her first child somewhat earlier than expected so we were without IT cover. We were quickly able to get Convergence on board and adjusted the support plan to provide for the next few months until Nicki returns. All reasonably painless," said Bell.

The Convergence peace of mind support plan is all about clarity and up-front agreement of a scope of systems covered under the fixed fee.


"After carefully assessing the systems the client wants us to support – this can be anything from a single server or software application to a company's entire IT resources, including workstations, networks, firewalls, smart phones, cloud based systems etc. – we work out a fixed monthly fee that is all inclusive and provides unlimited support hours," says Presnell.

The scope of the support plan is then complimented with a choice of gold, platinum or diamond SLAs to provide the client with the response times they need to keep their business operating.

"Convergence's response times are fantastic. They are quickly able to determine the severity of any IT problem and can often resolve it remotely. If an urgent site visit is required they are in pronto – no questions asked. We very rarely ask them to jump as most issues are not critical given their proactive attention to our systems. But on the odd occasion when we have asked, they have been there to support us very quickly. Their approach enables us to call Convergence without fear of a mammoth invoice appearing a few weeks later," says Bell.

nsaTax have seen a significant drop in their overall IT support costs and enjoy the confidence of not having to worry about their IT systems.

"As accountants, the financial benefits are, of course, also important to us. We like the certainty of expenses and on the whole our IT support costs have come down over the last three or so years despite continued and growing reliance on IT systems," says Bell.

Convergence Peace of Mind Support Plans are available to small and large organisations and generate a stress-free IT environment for companies relying on their IT systems to support their business. 

CASE STUDY//

nsaTax

AT A GLANCE//

INDUSTRY

- Financial Services

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

- To ensure critical IT business systems are operating at optimal levels and predictable costs with no surprises when extra help is required

SOLUTION

- A Convergence Peace of Mind Support Plan

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Reduced IT support costs, monthly fixed fee, 100 per cent predictable IT support expenses, pro-active and strategic input in addition to 'break-fix' support, unlimited support hours

FOR MORE INFO//

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