

Vision Express cleaning up their 'patch'

with help from 2bm

Since opening the very first 'One Hour' opticians back in 1988 Vision Express has remained at the forefront of the optical industry. Now with over 220 stores in the UK alone, the company has gone from strength to strength remaining true to its passionate belief of offering unparalleled levels of customer service.

Lying at the organisation's heart for the last twelve years has been its East Midlands' headquarters from where over 300 staff look after the day to day operations in conjunction with their colleagues in the high street.

Like most retailers, the need for speedy and reliable communication both internal and external is vital, and ensuring that happens around the clock is the job of a dedicated 'computer suite' located in Nottingham.

Growing pains

With more growth forecast it was clear that the current infrastructure in Nottingham was struggling to cope with any further expansion. "Quite frankly the room was in a bit of a mess," admitted IS Systems Engineer Chris Wardle.

"The cabling could be best described as a bit of jungle, having developed very much in an ad hoc fashion over the last five years or so. We had no real idea of what cable went where within the cabinets, all of which added unnecessary time when sorting out the day to day problems that arise."

"And with port space reaching a premium it was clear we needed to take a step back and quickly arrive at a solution to allow us to move forward."



The challenge 2bm faced at Vision Express



First class response

The solution was to put out a tender inviting companies to carry out a network audit and introduce a much cleaner and simpler set of cabling.

"We decided the best way forward was to tackle the job head on and get it out of the way in one foul swoop. We didn't have the manpower or time to undertake the work ourselves. So we were looking to partner with a company who not only offered a good price but one who was versatile enough to work with the brief we had put together," explained Chris.

"Several companies were approached and 2bm were the clear winners. They showed a good understanding of what we wanted to achieve and after an hour's briefing I had full confidence in their ability to deliver the job."



Case study

Work in progress

The belief was borne out when the job was completed ahead of schedule over one weekend, and up and running in time for the return of the office team on the Monday morning.

"We were delighted with how quickly the work was completed," explained Chris. "The team from 2bm tackled the job with vigour. They only had to call me a few times and in the end I was only required to visit site on two occasions, the last to complete the testing process on the Sunday to ensure we hit the ground running the following day."

"And in many ways it was like we had installed a completely new network. The difference between the Friday and the Monday was incredible and fully justified the decision to go ahead with the project."

"And whilst there weren't any problems the 2bm team were on hand on the Monday just in case any further work needed doing. From our point of view it couldn't have gone any better."

Freeing up space capacity

With a fully documented network mapping Vision Express were delighted to find that around 25% of the hubs' port capacity had been freed up. "We were seriously thinking about investing in a new switch as we thought we were very close to full capacity," smiled Chris.

"The cabling mess just didn't allow us any way to confirm that fact or not. Clearly we had and as a result of the work 2bm undertook we saved £1500 in the process."

The full audit of the cabinets detailed port locations, usage type by data or voice, and extension numbers on the voice distribution panel. All redundant patch leads were removed and the remaining were of the correct length. In addition all data cables were grey and voice cables blue.

"And we are determined to maintain the standard 2bm have set," added Chris. "We have a best practice to follow and ensure we don't encounter similar problems in the future."

Immediate benefits

Chris and the team saw immediate benefits as a result of their 'newly acquired' system. Time consuming tasks such as office moves, new equipment installation, phone number changes, are all now easier to affect, freeing up much needed time to focus on the increasing call on the team's services.

And a potentially serious incident was also averted when one of the switches failed shortly after the cabling work was finished.

"Thankfully we were quickly able to transfer the cables patched into the failed switch to the ports that had been freed up. Getting a new switch in would have taken 48 hours which would have led to serious downtime for the office staff."

About Us

2bm is one of the fastest growing providers of data centre solutions in the UK. Our aims are clear and simple ~ to offer unparalleled levels of advice, service and support. Located in the East Midlands, 2bm's clients include many blue chip organisations like Vision Express, across all sectors of commerce and industry.



Vastly improved cabling in racks



The summary

"As far as we are concerned it was money well spent, something that has more than paid for itself inside the first three months alone," said Chris. "I couldn't recommend the process highly enough to anyone faced with similar problems. And of course the team at 2bm."



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