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BYK enlists ecosystem expertise for vital one-time event

BYK Additives & Instruments is one of the world's leading suppliers of additives and measuring instruments. They work heavily with the coatings, inks and plastics industries, where inclusion of their additives improves product characteristics and production processes. Similarly, testing and measuring instruments from BYK can effectively evaluate the quality of colour, gloss and appearance as well as the physical properties of paint, plastic and paper products and are an important part of quality control. Today the company employs around 1,900 people worldwide and forms part of the ALTANA Group.

The Challenge

When ALTANA acquired the rheology business of Rockwood Holdings, Inc, intending to consolidate it with BYK, a number of integration projects were triggered between the two businesses to ensure that all IT systems could be unified. For the UK IT team, one of the most pressing issues was migrating the Rockwood Active Directory domain into the new ALTANA domain. Only once this occurred could the servers hosting all of the applications and user data be migrated, an important step in completing the acquisition process. A critical exercise and something most IT teams would not normally have to face, BYK decided to call on an expert to ensure a successful transition.

Dan Newton, Information Services Manager at BYK picks up the story "being acquired and having to do something like this doesn't happen very often.

I felt we needed help to accomplish it. I approached one of my colleagues at another Rockwood division for some advice and they suggested I speak with Servium. I believed that having some complementary expertise from someone used to doing this sort of thing would be invaluable".

Considerations

- Successfully migrate Active Directory domain post-acquisition
- Minimise impact of migration on users
- Overcome any potential compatibility issues
- Deliver against a time critical schedule
- Enable UK office to be in a strong position to support its users

Whilst it was acknowledged that there would be a cross-over period between the old domain and new, BYK wanted to make the switch as quickly as possible, without compromising its success. As such, Servium was invited to join the UK IT team to hear first-hand the objectives for the project and understand some of the technical considerations to be overcome.

It did not take Servium long to get a handle on the challenges. From the first meeting, they began making sensible suggestions BYK should consider before embarking on the project. “The engineers Servium brought along, were impressive. They quickly understood our systems, goals and ultimately what was entailed. With the knowledge they shared, I believed we would be in good hands” continues Dan.

The Solution

The migration project would take place over several months and because it would affect many parts of both the existing and destination infrastructure, Servium decided that sharing an onsite technical resource for the duration of the process would be beneficial. With so much at stake and the potential knock-on effects of the domain move affecting server infrastructure, networks and security, it was important to select the right engineer to work alongside BYK.

Through their Services Ecosystem, and network of world-class technical partners, Servium set about identifying exactly the resource BYK would need.



With the right expertise in place, the priority was to build a plan for the migration. Not a simple task, the transition would need to factor in a host of tasks including discovery of all applications to move to the new domain, identifying host servers, establishing which user groups should have access, phased migration and then testing. It was decided that the best approach would be to run both domains side-by-side, until everyone was satisfied the old domain could be deactivated.

The value of having Servium’s migration expert working within the team, soon became apparent. “I had expected to be in the position of calling on specialists in a variety of different areas to make the project a success, so having just one engineer who had all of the expertise we needed was brilliant. It made the project management between the UK and our new owner’s headquarters, located in Germany, so much easier” explains Dan.

Importantly, whilst not directly linked to the migration, the plan also took into account other significant considerations, ensuring that once operational, on the new domain, the UK would be in the best possible position to support its users. This involved identifying end-of-life hardware, candidates for refresh and even upgrading vital applications or operating systems ready for production on the new domain. This was unexpected value achieved through the project, which helped the UK become compliant with the security posture expected by the parent business in Germany.

Highlights

- Meticulous planning by people with expertise
- Solution delivered by running both domains until original could be determined obsolete
- Upgrading of vital applications and operating systems for production of new domain
- Identification of end-of-life hardware
- PC estate re-imaged to migrate client devices

In total, the project took nearly six months, with Servium onsite for the vast majority of this time. However, the migration did not end with the switchover from one domain to the other. Once live, all of the client devices now expected to be on the new domain, needed to be migrated also. Although only 100 users, the PC estate would need to be re-imaged to make this possible. Servium worked alongside the UK team to set up a virtual machine to distribute the new image to each device, making this transition considerably easier than anticipated.



The result

It was essential to keep user experience as consistent as possible throughout the migration process. Decommissioning servers, would inevitably lead to some inconvenience, so a lot of the critical work was scheduled to take place out of hours or at weekends. Thanks to the meticulous planning, disruption to the business was kept to a minimum.

“When I look back at what we had to negotiate to make this project a success, we undoubtedly achieved a better outcome in less time, than had we tried to undertake this alone. The systems in production on the new domain came across almost hitch-free and those we took remedial action with are all the better for it. This would not have been possible without such a comprehensive plan” suggests Dan.

According to Dan, at the heart of the projects’ success was the level of intimacy and knowledge of the system architecture that Servium was able to establish throughout, only made possible by having someone dedicated to the project and present to field questions and consult with, in real-time. “You need someone who’s going to know your systems, going to know the people and going to know your challenges - that made a big difference to us”.

Working with Servium

“From start to finish I think the engagement and commitment from Servium was exceptional. I really felt that both the engineer onsite and the team back at base took their role seriously and showed a level of ownership I don’t believe is too common. I really felt like they were part of my team” concludes Dan.

Outcome

- Any potential business disruptions kept to a minimum
- Solution outcome was time-impressive
- On site engineer ensured a high level of intimacy throughout
- Transition made considerably easier than expected





About Servium

Servium provides IT infrastructure services for medium to large enterprises in both the private and public sector. We pride ourselves on delivering innovative solutions inspired by overcoming the day-to-day and strategic IT challenges of our customers. We blend the best emerging technologies with professional customer service to answer these challenges and deliver economies previously not possible.

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