



Focusing on core business value delivers bottom line results

As a general rule you would not expect the marketing department to drive the information technology strategy of a company, so back in 2001 when Simx Ltd bought two Apple Mac computers for in-house design, nobody expected that decision would eventually change the company's entire strategic approach to IT.

Headquartered in Auckland, Simx has been a leading supplier to the New Zealand and Australian electrical and HVAC industry for nearly 30 years. In 2001 the decision was made to bring design in-house as part of developing the company's marketing team, so "we went looking to buy a couple of Macs" says Kumar Hari, Finance Director of Simx.

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Overview

Simx was bringing its marketing functions in-house and wanted to equip the new department with Apple systems. At the same time it needed to fully integrate the marketing systems with its office and production environments.

Challenge

Simx's core systems are Windows-based and initially it was a challenge to find a supplier with expertise in both Apple and Windows platforms that could seamlessly integrate both.

Objective

Integrate the marketing systems with the rest of the company, improve overall tech support and develop a cohesive plan to rationalise the information technology systems across the entire company.

Why Imagetext?

Imagetext was the only potential supplier with equal expertise in both Apple and Windows systems, and a track record of successfully integrating them.

The Solution

Since the initial project to equip and integrate the marketing department, the Simx-Imagetext partnership has evolved to the point where Imagetext is Simx's outsourced IT department. Imagetext now provides the hardware, software, integration services, mobile device management and full support for all of Simx's ICT systems, resulting in better systems at a lower cost.



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Kumar says that at the time the company had 15-20 staff, of which ten or so were using computers as part of their work.

"We initially struggled to find a supplier who had both Windows and Apple experience when we were looking to buy those two Macs. Our staff were all Windows users and at first we couldn't find a dealer

who could provide both Windows and Mac support and who had any kind of expertise at getting them to talk to each other," says Kumar.

"However, when we came across Imagetext they already had a Windows engineer on staff and a track record that demonstrated that they could install and support Macs in a Windows environment, so we opted to go with them as our supplier and we've never looked back," says Kumar.

Since those first Mac purchases in 2001, Simx has grown to over 80 staff, with 48 staff now using computers as part of their roles. Six are Mac users while the balance have Windows systems. Kumar says that the company owns none of its computer hardware, instead leasing everything on a three-year renewal cycle.

"That way the company can take advantage of hardware advances without the capital cost of owning assets that eventually become obsolete."

Today, Imagetext not only supplies Macs but also provides all computer and network hardware and software, plus also provides full support both on-site and via its dedicated remote management system.

Until two years ago, Simx had a staff member who provided internal support for its IT systems but after he left, Kumar approached Imagetext and asked

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if they could provide support on an out-sourced basis. Since that time Imagetext has helped Simx develop systems and processes to provide a more consistent computing environment, which has seen a marked reduction in IT support issues and training requirements.

“Over the past two years there’s been a significant drop in IT support issues, with more than 90% resolved immediately, primarily via our remote management systems,” says Darius Mistry, Managing Director of Imagetext.

“We meet monthly to discuss the immediate IT requirements, what will likely be needed over the next three to six months and also to review long term developments. We are no longer just an outsourced IT department but have become a proactive part of the business, providing assistance and insight into how technology can help the business grow,” says Darius.

A good example of this proactive approach is the intelligent implementation of mobile technology to improve customer service. Simx has sales reps throughout the country and last year the company embarked on an iPad rollout to improve its ability to provide mobile customer service in the field. It

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now has 28 iPad users, primarily for sales and CRM systems, plus uses iPhones companywide.

Over the years that Simx and Imagetext have worked together, Simx has continually updated and upgraded its systems wherever possible, to provide improved services and competitive advantage. Kumar says just some of the advances the company has made over the years include auto barcoding in its warehouse, an automated ERP system and online EDI.

Darius says that underpinning Simx’s approach to its technology requirements is a view at odds with the more common business belief that “IT is a cost to be kept as low as possible whenever possible.”

“Simx approaches its IT in the same manner as it approaches its manufacturing production lines, regarding them as business production systems. This



means that rather than looking at the costs, you tend to focus more on the production capabilities and so you then concentrate on utilisation to maximise your return on investment,” says Darius.

“The partnership has worked well for us. Where I used to be hands-on with IT, now Imagetext manages our systems. We also get the benefit of all of Imagetext’s experience with its other customers, which essentially gives us access to a much wider pool of expertise at no additional cost,” says Kumar.

“As a company we have one point of contact for our primary IT support and services, which makes everything much easier to manage. And

because there has always been a strong emphasis on documentation, it means there are never any concerns with regard to continuity and knowledge about us and how we work, because everything is captured and recorded.”

“We didn’t want to have an IT department – we are not an IT company and it’s not our area of expertise – but we did want the benefits that good IT systems bring. So we keep all our systems up-to-date and we are always looking for improvements. In the short term this approach might appear costly but in the long term it pays off, because our systems let us deliver great customer support and service which is one of our key competitive advantages.”



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Phone: 09 623 3102 Email: info@imagetext.co.nz www.imagetext.co.nz