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Hazel Phillips
Head of HR and IT
Recipharm

Customer Review

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Established in 1995 in Sweden, Recipharm is one of Europe's leading contract development and manufacturing organisations. It supports pharmaceutical companies in taking their products from early development to commercial manufacturing and on throughout the product lifecycle.

The UK subsidiary is based in Ashton-under-Lyne, where it employs around 150 people. Recipharm has established a successful niche in enabling pharmaceutical clients to outsource difficult-to-manufacture products. These are primarily solid dose products such as tablets, but also include creams, ointments, liquids and inhalers.

From the Bardsley Vale site, Hazel Phillips, Head of Human Resources and IT, explains why Recipharm chose Datel Advansys to carry out a major update of its IT infrastructure, which it now monitors and maintains.

Was there a particular trigger that drove the refresh of your infrastructure, or a growing sense that all wasn't well?

Both really. We'd understandably made manufacturing the main priority for investment and as a consequence our IT infrastructure was showing its age.

Then, last year, one of our old core switches broke. We really struggled to maintain 'business as usual', as we couldn't access core business applications and systems, such as ERP.

It sounds as if this was quite a turning-point.

While you can just about keep everything going, there's no great impetus for change. But if we didn't know it before, the core switch failure really brought home the criticality of our IT systems and shone the spotlight on our lack of investment to date.

We wanted a long-term solution, not just a short-term fix as it made us realise that without a strategy for proactive monitoring and management, we had no visibility of potential issues or system usage. We would be permanently on the back foot, just waiting for the next disaster to happen – and it would be a case of 'when', not 'if'.

Incidentally, there was a silver lining to this crisis: we were recommended to call in Datel Advansys to get us up and running again. We were impressed by their professionalism and the way in which they didn't just fix the initial problem, but also offered advice on how to avoid a recurrence.

What were your criteria in choosing a provider to take on this major project?

We decided to take a long hard look at how to improve business continuity and disaster recovery. Clearly, our network was badly in need of a refresh.

Nowadays both staff and visitors expect to be able to access their email and data across the site, but wireless access was very patchy. We had also embarked on virtualisation, but were not getting the most out of this and it was due for an upgrade.

Once we'd made the decision to upgrade our infrastructure and implement a robust platform for the business, we had to consider our options and choose the right technology provider.

As part of the process, we invited five potential partners to meet with us and discuss our requirements. Each was asked the same questions: What would you propose in terms of the solution and should we keep IT management and support in-house or outsource it?

Datel Advansys outshone their competitors for their expertise, their pragmatic approach and their willingness to discuss our requirements and share their thoughts on the best way forward, impartially offering different options. They were head and shoulders above the rest and the obvious choice to refresh our infrastructure and help us to build a more resilient business.

I should add that, rather than blinding us with tech talk, Datel Advansys explained everything in plain English, so that we were comfortable in understanding the benefits and implications of their proposals on our business.

What were the main recommendations?

Datel Advansys submitted a detailed proposal, for what was, in effect, a private cloud whereby we would have greater flexibility to access resources but the data would still be kept on site and therefore remain under our control.

Other recommendations included 'recycling' the existing fibre links between buildings together with the existing switch cabinets located in each of the buildings, but with new high-performance Cisco Catalyst switches, configured with redundancy for resilience. They also advised virtualising all our servers onto a cluster of three new physical servers, with an attached storage area network.

The implementation work took place over a two to three-week period. Throughout, the emphasis was on minimising disruption to

our daily business and it all went swimmingly. For example, the networking side of the project was undertaken over a weekend, so that by the time everyone arrived for work on the Monday it was up and running.

The project was delivered on time and under budget, too, which was a pleasant surprise. Datel Advansys takes a cost-effective approach, advising on how we could reduce expenditure without cutting corners on quality.

I mentioned wireless earlier. We now have enhanced wireless access across the whole site. We can pick up our emails on different devices wherever we are, and visitors such as customers, suppliers and members of the board have the convenient, secure access that they have come to expect.

With the money saved on the overall project budget, we're going to implement two more wireless access points to improve coverage in our admin areas.

How has the involvement of Datel Advansys made life easier for you and the IT team?

We no longer have that constant, nagging feeling of 'what's going to go wrong today?' We have far fewer calls to the IT team and we're no longer fire fighting all the time. Datel Advansys provides automated 24-hour monitoring and, as their team in Warrington starts work at 7 a.m., this means that they can spot and pre-empt any emerging issues before our own working day begins. Basically, they act as the second line of support for our small in-house IT team.

The Recipharm leadership team now has confidence that our business is much more resilient and less vulnerable to IT failure. We also have a flexible, future-proof platform in place to support our growth and, with Datel Advansys looking after our IT; we can focus on our core business.

Datel Advansys are very approachable. Whatever issues arise, they have met it all before and can fix the problem before it impacts our business.

Through regular contact and meetings with them, we're developing a much more strategic approach to our IT.

That original ad hoc contact when our core switch crashed last year has become a successful working partnership. I feel there's longevity in the relationship and I know Datel Advansys are always there to help us. This brings great peace of mind and I genuinely recommend them.

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About Datel Advansys

The Datel name is renowned within the IT industry for delivering complex solutions across a wide range of industry sectors. With over 150 people and offices across the UK, more than 900 companies trust Datel to design implement and support their business needs.

Datel Advansys is a specialist in IT infrastructure solutions; from initial consultancy, analysis and design, training and support, through to fully outsourced hosted or remote managed services.
Datel Advansys focuses primarily on the infrastructure and office productivity tools which are core to any IT solution. Specialising in hardware configuration network design and security and on-going management, Datel Advansys' team has years of experience delivering complex solutions to both small and large enterprises.

Our approach is to work with proven best of breed vendors and products, utilising proven processes procedures and methodologies to deliver projects on time and to budget. We are determined to ensure that our customers maximise business benefit from IT, by minimising both cost and risk, increasing performance, taking advantage of innovation and therefore safeguarding the business.

Key benefits to Recipharm of working with Datel Advansys:

• **Improved availability -** single points of failure eliminated wherever possible to ensure continuous service, with built-in redundancy.

• **Flexible resources –** virtual machines can be reallocated across different physical servers and additional computing power can be brought on stream at short notice.

• **Remote monitoring and management -** proactive identification and resolution of emerging issues before they can affect the business.

• **Long term cost savings –** consolidation of multiple servers on to a single server reduces the cost of capital equipment, space and power, cooling and maintenance.

• **Expert support –** Datel Advansys is Recipharm's technology partner, helping the company to apply IT strategically to achieve its business goals.