Case Study

Think Ahead benefit from secure, efficient solutions that enable them to work from anywhere at anytime.

Think Ahead is a not-for-profit organisation that want to see a society where everyone with mental health problems can flourish. The Think Ahead programme is a new route into social work, for graduates and career-changers who want to make a real difference to people with mental health problems. We spoke with Liz Ambekar, Finance and Operations Director at Think Ahead about the IT support provided to help strengthen their IT security and improve how they work remotely.

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The challenge

Uncertainty in their IT setup

Before partnering with Sharp in 2021, Think Ahead were not satisfied with the level of security they received from their existing provider and didn't feel they had the right IT environment for their needs. Particularly since they moved from being office-based to their current set up of working from home.

Think Ahead's team were facing challenges when working remotely, including accessing their files and answering calls.

The remote desktop was hard to manage and they were unable to efficiently re-route and distribute calls to relevant team members.

Sharp were recommended to Think Ahead by another not-for-profit organisation that Sharp support. Liz said that the "Charity's Chief Executive highly recommended Sharp" which is why she reached out to initially carry out an IT systems review.

Think Ahead then went forward with a competitive tender exercise to find a new IT Support Provider and Sharp won due to "providing the best overall value for money" Liz said.

The challenge

- Not satisfied with the level of IT security .
- Hard to manage and access files via the remote desktop.
- Didn't have the correct IT setup for their business needs.
- Re-routing and distributing calls to team members.

The solution

- Full IT systems review to understand current set up.
- Supporting their remote desktop and getting SharePoint set up.
- Set up Sharp's Hosted Telephony solution.
- Complete IT Manager to support the maintenance and monitoring of all of their IT.

- Dedicated team who becomes an extension of theirs.

The result

- SharePoint has improved the day-to-day working life of the team.
- Improved IT security, helping to mitigate the risk of a data breach.
- Hosted Telephony has provided simplicity and flexibility.
- Great value in having a dedicated team that you can easily communicate with.

The solution
Solutions for secure and efficient working

Sharp initially completed a full system IT review to identify Think Ahead's overall IT landscape, look at their IT infrastructure, level of security and what improvements they needed to make.

The first big change was removing their remote desktop and getting everyone set up to work from SharePoint which would help resolve the file access challenges the team were facing. Ensuring the security of their data was also of great importance, so storing it in one central location with restrictive access on confidential folders was also part of the solution.

Sharp's telephony platform was suggested as members of a remote team could share the same number and have calls equally distributed between them all.

For the general management of their IT, Sharp's Complete IT Manager (CITM) solution was the right fit . As part of this service Sharp would take full control of Think Ahead's IT and offer proactive support to ensure you are always working efficiently and securely.

"Sharp are a cut above other IT support providers."

Liz Ambekar, Finance and Operations Director, Think Ahead
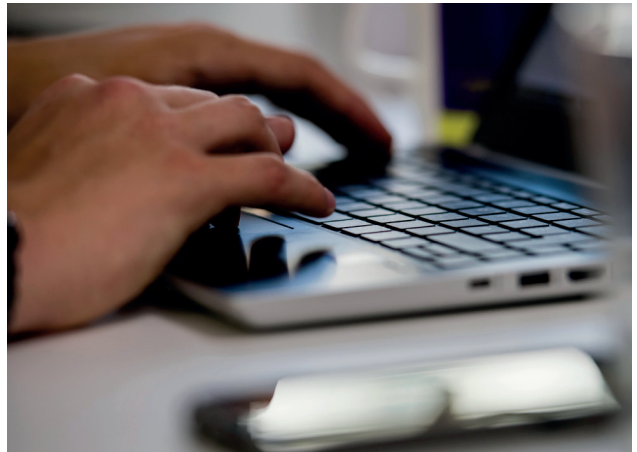
"The nuts and bolts just happen and the consultative approach and relationship delivered by our dedicated Account Manager and Technical Consultant is what makes the support perfect for us."

Liz Ambekar, Finance and Operations Director, Think Ahead

The result
Improvements to day-to-day working life

The implementation of SharePoint has meant that the team are now able to easily and quickly access what they need to complete their jobs. Liz explained that "Overnight SharePoint changed the way we worked – for the better. The fact that people no longer complain means that everything is working as it should and well."

Think Ahead were also searching for a new IT provider who could strengthen their IT security. "Being a charity, we hold personal data which means we need to make sure our systems are robust and secure."

Sharp have helped Think Ahead further secure their data by "Securing it all in one central location, with restrictive access on confidential folders – all things to help mitigate the risk of a data breach," Liz said.

The roll out of our Hosted Telephony solution conquered their usability challenges and has enabled the remote team to share the same number and calls, with Liz saying "Hosted Telephony from Sharp enables us to manage a high volume of calls between a team who aren't sat together. The simplicity and flexibility has been really beneficial."

As part of Sharp's CITM service, Think Ahead benefit from a dedicated team who get to know their organisation inside out. Liz explains that "Having a dedicated team to reach out to makes communicating much easier and problems are dealt with efficiently."

Being a charity, Think Ahead also benefit from Sharp's charity pricing which is very helpful as cost is usually a constraint.

Overall, the new partnership, implementation of SharePoint and Hosted Telephony has been well received by the Think Ahead team. Liz regularly asks the team to feedback on Sharp's support and Liz said there is "Never anything, which is great because everybody loves to complain about IT."

"We saw a pretty much instant change and benefit in the new IT support and services from Sharp."

Liz Ambekar, Finance and Operations Director, Think Ahead

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