

Riverbank expands Monitor Audio's network east

Case study

Company

- Monitor Audio

Market Sector

- Hi-fi loudspeaker design

Riverbank services

- Managed network support
- Network & IT infrastructure
- Backup services
- Business continuity
- Remote working
- Comms & e-mail

"Riverbank provided us with everything that we needed; there were no teething problems - everything works, both here and in China"

Phillip Evans
Monitor Audio

The risk involved in moving its entire manufacturing operation to China was considerable but, two years down the line, the risk has paid off, according to Monitor Audio, one of the UK's most successful manufacturers of loudspeakers. Quality levels have risen and, with the help of Riverbank IT Management, communications between its Essex HQ and the new manufacturing base in Dong Guan continue to run smoothly.

Faced with escalating costs and increasing competition, like many others in business and industry, Monitor Audio made the decision to join the growing number of companies in Europe who have been quick to take advantage of China's impressive technical skills base and made the trek eastwards at the end of 2004.

However, with its 20,000 sq ft warehouse and head office situated in Rayleigh, efficient communication was key, which is where Riverbank IT Management were able to make a difference, according to Phillip Evans, Financial Director, Monitor Audio.

"Following the handover in Dong Guan in April 2005, Adrian Tyte, our Operations Director has been based at our new manufacturing site in China," Evans says. "Because we need to speak with him regularly, the efficient running of our server, as well as our telecommunications, is essential to the continued successful running of our business."

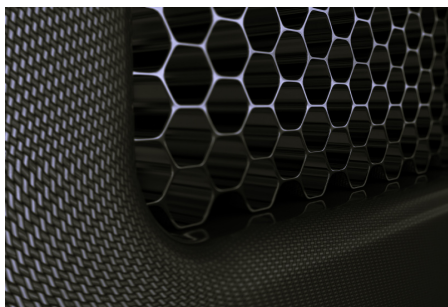


"Ultimately, cost was the major factor for our decision," Evans continues. "An unexpected bonus has been that quality levels have risen; lower labour costs meant that we were able to increase the level of quality control on the factory floor from the outset."

Riverbank's successful five-year working history with Monitor Audio was a key ingredient in the smooth transition of a process which could have been fraught with technical glitches. Newdick and his team were able to organise the most efficient means of streamlining communications between the company's UK HQ and its Chinese manufacturing base.

"Riverbank provided us with everything that we needed; there were no teething problems - everything works, both here and in China," Evans confirms

Riverbank first worked with Monitor Audio in 2002 at the latter's old site in Cambridge. "At the beginning, Monitor Audio had an aging, clumsy network, an indifferent service provider and a poor level of support," says Malcolm Newdick, Managing Director, Riverbank. "We were able to replace the old network and improve the service they received. We subsequently assisted with Monitor Audio's move to its new Essex in 2000



riverbank

IT MANAGEMENT

by pinpointing the additional requirements they would need and designing their new network.”

“Riverbank has definitely helped us grow from the days when we used a single server to today when multiple servers are necessary,” adds Evans, who admits that he initially had his doubts because of the geography. “I thought that the 100 miles between us might be problematical, but my fears were unfounded. Riverbank’s particular remote access process has proved extremely efficient.”

Evans working relationship with Newdick has encompassed a seven-year period during a career progression which has taken in three companies. He reports Riverbank’s service as consistently friendly and efficient. “I wouldn’t think twice about using them again were I to move elsewhere,” he says.

Monitor Audio was set up in 1972 by Mohammed Iqbal and for 25 years it ticked over very healthily, producing relatively small numbers of high-price, high-quality Hi-Fi loudspeakers. On average, its turnover was around £1.5m a year. However, in 1997 a management buy-out, involving current Managing Director, Andrew Flatt and four other investors, gave it the boost in needed to grow. In just 10 years, this British company has become renowned for its mix of innovation, reliability, performance and quality and, in

September 2006, it reported a £11 million turnover.

“From the beginning we focussed on expanding our global distributor base,” Evans continues. “As a result, we now have distributorships in 60 countries in Europe, North America, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Oceania and, most recently, in Latin America where – particularly in Mexico - we are experiencing our most rapid expansion.”

The decision to build the business by taking on new territories, providing more marketable products and introducing more ranges has paid off. In 2005, Monitor Audio won two major industry awards and, in 2006, it won four more, from industry bible, What Hi-Fi, the most significant being Product of the Year 2005 Best Speaker Packages and Product of the Year 2006 Style Speaker Packages..

Newdick pinpoints the key factors which have helped make his company’s long-standing relationship with Monitor Audio work so well. “The consequence of providing them with a robust and resilient network means that the system runs very well. We’re available on the phone via remote control software and can be with them – virtually – within minutes,” he says. “We also visit them every one or two months to ensure the smooth running of their system.”

As well as continuing to deliver a

high standard of TLC, Riverbank has recently established a failsafe disaster recovery programme. “Our system is backed up daily and, leaving nothing to chance, our accounts on an hourly basis. If we ever do have a problem or requirement, 99 times out of a 100, I’m confident that Riverbank will very quickly come up with a solution,” Evans confirms.

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