

Case Study

Syplex IT supports Ipex Capital & its venture companies

Introduction

Ipex Capital is an independent, UK-based venture capital company providing funding to early-stage science and technology companies. Originally the venture capital arm of PA Consulting, it was spun out in June 2008 but continues to work closely with PA Consulting to develop the technology and markets for its early-stage companies. It is the sole investor in its venture companies and maximises company value by providing proactive commercial, legal, and HR support for them all.

Amongst Ipex Capital's venture companies is Aegate, a patient safety communications company. Established in 2004, the company's business system combats pharmaceutical counterfeiting by the secure authentication of pharmaceuticals at the point of dispensing. It has operations in Belgium, Greece, Italy and Ireland (with plans in place for further growth across Europe in the next few years).

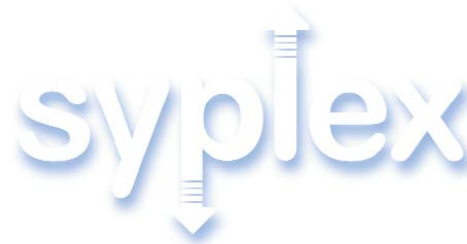
The Challenge

As part of the support services it provides to its venture companies, Ipex Capital has funded an advanced IT infrastructure. Chris Haynes, a Partner in Ipex Capital and CFO of the Ipex Fund, explains the requirement:

"Until May 2009, Ipex Capital and its venture companies were able to use PA Consulting's IT platform but the spun off group needed an autonomous, scalable and highly secure IT solution. We also needed maximum flexibility as, in due course, some of our venture companies will be divested and others will come on board. We also have mobile workers, some operating from home and others on overseas assignments. We currently have five companies in our portfolio: Aegate, Autotxt, Zensify, PlaqueTec and Crombie 123 - all of varying sizes and in different locations and with individual needs to be considered in addition to our own at head office. A small-scale procurement exercise led to the appointment of Syplex Ltd, which had been recommended to us by Conor MacGinley, Head of Quality and Compliance at Aegate. Conor had worked extensively with Syplex in his former capacity as IT Operations Manager at Celltech Group. We were impressed with them as individuals and they came up with an appropriately-priced solution that met our specification."

Conor confirms the complexity of the IT implementation task:

"It was not so much the technical issues, as we had complete confidence that Syplex were specifying, supplying and installing the optimal solution for our requirements. It was principally the fact that the migration from PA Consulting's systems had to take place with minimal disruption to any of the businesses and also comply with PA Consulting's necessarily very stringent security restrictions. It also had to take place over a single weekend, which just happened to have one of the worst snowfalls on record so many staff were unable to get into their offices for systems' testing and to collect their laptops."



Key Features:

- Flexible, scalable and highly secure IT
- Innovative, cost-effective and appropriately scaled solution
- Optimised for remote working in the UK and numerous overseas locations
- VMware ESX ensures cost-effective and environmentally-friendly server utilisation
- Syplex service responsive, technically skilled and commercially aware
- Syplex team blends seamlessly with client companies
- Support provided worldwide
- Flexible ongoing support scaled to client requirements

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The Solution

The technical solution specified by Syplex is based on server and network virtualisation (VMWare ESX server and Cisco network switches). Site to site VPNs were deployed, plus Riverbed "Steelhead" to achieve WAN acceleration. Riverbed Mobile controller and Actividentity two factor authentication is used by remote workers. Chris is highly satisfied with the technology deployed:

"The solution gives us exactly the flexibility Iplex Capital specified. If we enlarge our portfolio of venture companies, the existing solution will cater for the new entrant. And if we sell one of the venture businesses, its data can readily be separated from the central server. Riverbed "Steelhead" has enabled us to achieve very high WAN acceleration at reasonable cost, meaning that people working from home or remote offices feel fully connected to their company office."

Conor, too, is satisfied from the perspective of Aegate's own requirements:

"The architecture Syplex have installed makes working remotely throughout Europe simple and effective as access to our central systems is very fast and reliable. Actividentity two factor authentication is used when logging in remotely and gives us very high levels of confidence in data security. This will be of advantage also as we work towards achieving the International Information Security Standard ISO/IEC 27001. Similarly, we have complete confidence in our backup and disaster recovery capabilities from the VMWare ESX server virtualisation which would deliver very rapid recovery from any system failure."

Despite the practical difficulties caused by the bad weather, the migration from PA Consulting's IT infrastructure was achieved with few difficulties, as Conor recalls:

"It all went very smoothly. Jonathan Rushton from Syplex is an excellent project manager as well as having extremely high level technical skills so any problems were resolved quickly and efficiently. Syplex also worked very well with the IT team members at PA Consulting, who were immensely helpful throughout the migration."

The ongoing relationship between Iplex Capital and Syplex covers maintenance of the system architecture and solution components plus fulfilling any new business IT requirements of the parent and all of its venture companies. For instance, providing the IT in overseas offices as the individual companies expand into new territories. Sharepoint has also recently been installed at Aegate.

The Benefits

In terms of the outcomes from the appointment of Syplex, Conor believes:

"We ended up with exactly the solution we wanted. In fact, it was even better than we expected. By being part of the Iplex Capital centralised IT solution Aegate has, in effect, ended up with far superior IT than we could possibly have afforded had we funded it ourselves. Syplex people have the knack of becoming integral members of our team. You never feel they are outsiders concerned just to have a contractor-type relationship with no real understanding of what makes our business tick. At every level, they are very high quality individuals whose technical and personal skills we value very much. They are responsive, safe and trusted hands who free us from having to worry about any aspect of our IT."

Chris, too, greatly values the relationship with, Syplex:

"Syplex people are highly intelligent, straightforward, easy to deal with and also commercially savvy in terms of understanding how our extended business operates. We did not have to spend a great deal of time bringing them up to speed, which was a valued aspect of their appointment. They were forward-thinking in terms of the solution they devised for us. It was appropriately priced and scaled but also incorporated the latest technology innovations so it was far from being a conventional or predictable set-up. They are also an appropriately-sized supplier for us - able to provide the skills and responsiveness we need while treating us as a key customer."

For further details on how Syplex Ltd can help you achieve your IT objectives:

Call: 01223 810 000, e-mail: info@syplex.co.uk or visit: www.syplex.co.uk