



Softcat Case Study

Softcat investment in audio visual technology promotes company culture and improves sales

"Our starting point is always to get a practical understanding of what the customer is trying to achieve and then to give them precise options. It's great to see the innovative, multi-functional results in the new Softcat facility that we and Softcat are very proud of."

*Dee Reed,
Carillion Director*

Softcat is one of the largest and is the fastest growing UK IT reseller that helps corporate and public sector organisations address IT sourcing challenges, software licensing needs, and innovate with new IT solutions and managed services.

When Softcat moved to what it describes as its primary residence in Marlow, Berkshire, in 2013, the building presented a blank canvas on which to paint a picture of the company's culture and capability for staff, customers and partners.

Softcat management observed that resellers are not typically users of kit, they sell it. They saw the Marlow office as an opportunity to embed the technology and systems they sell into their own environment and working practices.

Softcat turned to Carillion Communications, a preferred Softcat AV partner, to help them specify the best technology to create a fabulous workplace that would also showcase their product portfolio.

Looking for technology that improves communication

As they considered the future operations of the company and the technology to run their business, Softcat had a few principles in mind. They wanted to be as paperless as possible in order to harness the speed and control advantages of digital communication. Their objective was to get information to wider audiences and avoid historical bottlenecks and silos that sometimes leave people under-informed or in the dark.



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Finally, Softcat held the firm belief that, though high tech, all new systems had to be accessible and usable in order to generate company-wide buy-in and overcome the frustration and complexity of legacy systems that were IT-support hungry and therefore under-used.

Combining sales, morale and social uplift

One of the key features of the new Softcat communications technology is a large IP TV system comprising 26 screens that is used in several different ways.



The IPTV system enables Softcat to take a broad approach to communication programmes within its business. When needed, it can convey commercial information that reinforces staff knowledge and in turn facilitates sales. At other times the company can broadcast light entertainment for hard working staff - such as sporting events like the Olympics, World Cup or Commonwealth Games - or promote social gatherings where staff can get to know each other better and enjoy themselves, such as quiz nights.

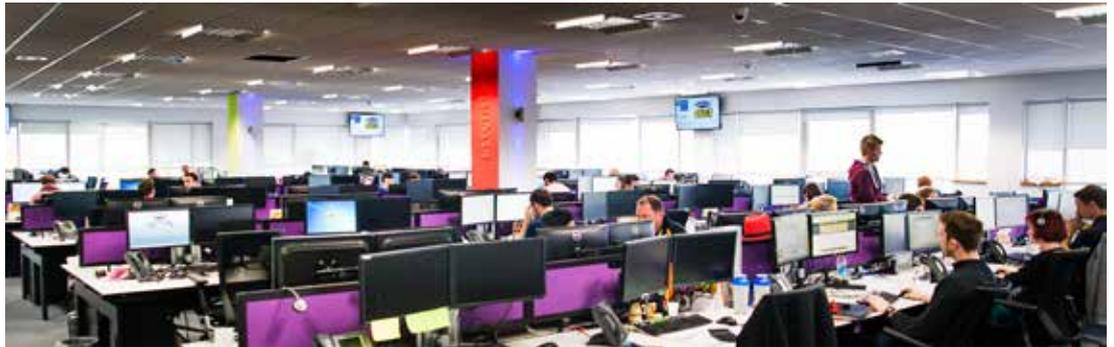
The blend of business and social communications represents the Softcat ethos. The high impact nine screen video wall on the first floor is used to show company sales figures every Monday but is also used extensively for gaming. Softcat encourages a work-hard, play-hard culture that enables people to perform to the best of their ability and yet remain as fresh and motivated as possible.

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The centrally controlled IPTV system works across Softcat's four offices in Bristol, London, Manchester and Marlow and allows the company to reach a wide audience with continuously changing yet relevant messages that might otherwise get lost in email. The result is that everyone is in the loop and fully engaged in the company's plans – as well as having the opportunity for a bit of fun on occasion!



Doing more with less space

When moving to a larger building Softcat assumed that they'd need more meeting rooms. Part of the reason for the assumption was that their meeting rooms had previously been fully booked, oversubscribed and even double parked, with one meeting often having to oust another group from a room.

However, Carillion recommended a digital solution and by implementing an online booking and room-side system Softcat saved half of the anticipated meeting room space. Now staff are able to book and see room availability via Outlook, which means Softcat enjoys fully utilised meeting rooms without the historical inefficiencies.



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Unified comms improve management time

Historical video conferencing between Softcat offices were described as “rubbish,” mainly because use and presentations required so much training or IT intervention. New unified communications make director and management meetings across four locations far more productive with the introduction of technology that is a genuine enabler. Now iPad control makes meetings a simple press-and-go matter and is described as “*idiot proof*.” Softcat’s Commercial Director, David Simpson, says “*Weekly management meetings were becoming a challenge but new systems are used daily and brings the team together in more ways than we imagined.*”

AV technology amplifies the Softcat culture

Simpson describes the company culture as non-conformist. In fact, the word he uses is “*wacky*.” Underlying the unusual description is a serious commitment to a collegiate approach to business. The company believes in allowing staff to “*try things*,” and Simpson says the company “*gives it to the people.*”

Softcat uses the TV displays to support and amplify their culture. Digital signage has improved the sending and receiving of information. For example, for training days, or again for social events, including Save the Date notices for gatherings such as the May Ball, an event in support of the national children’s charity Dreams Come True that works to make the dreams of terminally and seriously ill children happen.

The signage is also used to introduce new starters and engineers, which helps with staff integration and teamwork, and promotes closer Softcat working relationships.

The new medium improves knowledge sharing and collaboration with an immediacy and breadth that isn’t possible via desktop media.

Carillion’s priceless practical advice

The overwhelming response of customers and vendors to the Softcat office has been “*it’s like nothing we’ve ever seen before.*” Softcat gives credit to Carillion for their invaluable and crystal clear advice, as well as for the quality of installation.

David Simpson said of Carillion’s involvement in the project: “*They got us; they understood our needs. They suggested different options and they didn’t bombard us with technical nonsense.*”

Dee Reed, Carillion Director, commented, “*Our starting point is always to get a practical understanding of what the customer is trying to achieve and then to give them precise options. It’s great to see the innovative, multi-functional results in the new Softcat facility that we and Softcat are very proud of.*”

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