

RECOVERY SERVICES

Sungard Availability Services keeps Irwin Mitchell afloat during floods

Founded in 1912, Irwin Mitchell is one of the UK's top law firms, with over 2,100 employees based at seven offices in the UK and two international offices in Spain. The award-winning firm relies heavily on its IT systems and contact centre, which handles more than 7,000 incoming calls daily.

Strict customer Service Level Agreements must be met regardless of a business interruption and Irwin Mitchell has worked with Sungard AS for several years to minimise any disruption to its IT or telephony.

This longstanding commitment to business continuity (BC) planning was put to the test in 2007 when severe flooding hit its Sheffield head office, engulfing the ground floors of its two buildings in the city. The law firm invoked Sungard AS's services at 6pm and its recovery plan swung into action. The smooth, fast recovery led Gary Thomas, Head of IT Operations for Irwin Mitchell, to comment, "Considering that we didn't invoke until the night before, it was a remarkable feat to be fully operational again for the start of business at 8am the following morning."

Fortunately, the floods hit the building after the call centre had closed on a Monday evening but it was now essential for Irwin Mitchell and Sungard AS to ensure that normal services could be resumed the following morning. **While Irwin Mitchell focused on bringing a makeshift call centre online on one of the higher floors of its building, Sungard AS readied its nearest recovery centre – in Elland, West Yorkshire – for the arrival of 50 contact centre staff.**

As part of the BC plan, Sungard AS kept a supply of IP phones similar to those used in Irwin Mitchell's call centre at its Elland facility. By 1am on Tuesday morning Sungard AS had set up two recovery suites, each equipped with 100 PCs and 30 IP phones. **As part of the recovery Sungard AS mirrored Irwin Mitchell's call centre PC systems so employees had access to the same information they were accustomed to at their normal place of work.** Sungard AS shipped in a further 70 IP phones and, by 4am, Irwin Mitchell had access to 100 call centre positions, each identical to those in its own offices. As Gary Thomas says, "To all intents and purposes the Sungard recovery centre became another Irwin Mitchell building".

A key component of Irwin Mitchell's crisis management strategy was its well publicised 0800 staff information line, designed to keep employees up-to-date with developments. Consequently, the morning following the invocation everyone knew exactly what they needed to do. Call centre staff were told to travel to work as normal, following which 50 agents were transferred to the recovery site by bus while the remainder continued to use the firm's boardroom as a makeshift call centre.



Business problem

Leading law firm Irwin Mitchell needed a partner it could trust to keep the business running in the event of business interruption.

Solution

- Recovery Services
- Workplace, Technology, Telephony and QuickShip
- Continuity Management Solution.

"The recovery worked beautifully and our clients would not have noticed any drop in the level of service."

Gary Thomas,
Head of IT Operations,
Irwin Mitchell



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Business benefits

- Recovery within two hours
- Backup office space
- VoIP telephony prevents downtime at its business critical contact centre
- Significant savings in storage costs
- Ability to meet customer needs, no matter what.

The firm prides itself on the fact that it answers 98% of calls within 15 seconds. On the day after the floods this dropped only marginally to 96% – an impressive performance given the circumstances. Voicing his firm’s appreciation, Gary Thomas says, “Sungard delivered a very smooth, professional service and provided us with the expertise and reassurance we needed at what was quite a stressful time.”

Effective planning, a solid IT infrastructure and a rapid response by Sungard AS ensured Irwin Mitchell was able to receive client calls and route them across its organisation so effectively.

Despite flooding so severe it caused £2m worth of damage to the firm’s buildings, Irwin Mitchell was able to maintain near normal levels of service, more than justifying its investment in BC management. Gary Thomas remarks, “BC is often something for which organisations begrudge paying

as it can be hard to see an immediate return on investment. But our board has always recognised its value and this one invocation gave us that return. Having a clearly defined BC plan in place helped save the business. The damage we would have sustained otherwise is incalculable.”

Since the floods, Irwin Mitchell’s BCM programme has continued to evolve under the leadership of its Risk and Business Continuity Manager Gary Hibberd. He explains, “Our BCM philosophy can be summed up in one word: people-centric. It’s not just about recovering technology but about looking after our people and making sure they have everything they need to continue doing their jobs. We recognise the importance of our team in ensuring we continue to meet client obligations so they are reflected in every aspect of our BC planning.”

About Sungard Availability Services

Sungard Availability Services provides managed IT services, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software, and disaster recovery services. To learn more, visit www.sungardas.co.uk or call 0800 143 413

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