



Background

Cardium Solutions were formed in 1998 and provide Microsoft installation and consultancy services for the corporate and large SME market. Three years ago, having been approached by Microsoft as one of their existing gold partners Cardium founded www.yourofficeanywhere.co.uk – a solution aimed specifically at the SME market and is wholly owned by Cardium Outsourcing.

The issue for SME's

Typically the SME market has a small business server running files services and exchange, with also the potential to run SQL Server databases, a firewall and Microsoft Sharepoint, Sage accounting and any other line of business application. The issues for SME's are as follows:-

- They are typically in a 3-7 year cycle of renewing their server hardware and software.
- SME's typically run POP3 email which does not allow collaboration; if they download email to a PC they cannot then download the email to another PC (say at home) without a spilt mailbox issue. More over if the PC crashes with their email on it and they have not backed up their local PST file then they have lost not only their email but also potentially all their contacts and schedule information they have put in their calendar.
- SME's do not usually employ a dedicated IT person to look after their IT infrastructure and even if they do they are supposed to be a jack of all trades and master of none.
- If a user leaves the organisation a license and server hardware usage has been "purchased" for this user even though they are no longer accessing the system.
- When the employee or business owner wants to access systems from anywhere outside the office they do not have the skills to set this up themselves or if things don't work resolve technical issues that stop them accessing the server whilst away from the office.
 - If they do have the skills the issues around upload and download speeds of ADSL connections means that their experience when working away from the office can be poor.
- Server hardware is often over specified by the people who are trying to sell a solution or the hardware/license model is outgrown:-
 - The SME may have growth expectations they do not meet in the time frame and therefore an over specified server results in under utilisation of the server which they have paid for.
 - The reseller may be concerned around growth and naturally adds in contingency when specifying the server which again may not be utilised by the SME.

- More over the SME may grow faster than expected and out grow the license limitations of Microsoft Small Business server or the hardware that was specified to run the application. This makes budgeting for this difficult if not impossible.
- Startup costs and renewal costs for a server solution and licenses (excluding laptops/desktops and office productivity software), including installation costs are typically around £5,000 to £15,000 for SME's of around 5-50 users.
- Although SME's back up the data the backup tape is invariably left either in the server or on top of it – so any kind of disaster – fire, flood, robbery means that their data is lost and probably for ever.
- SME's do not have a secure room with air conditioning to house the server.
- SME's do not fully utilise all the functionality available to them in the current suite of Microsoft Software and are not able to work “smarter”:-
 - Accessing email from exchange using a Windows Smartphone/Mobile device.
 - Accessing email using a browser.
 - Accessing documents whilst away from the office and checking these back in once finished utilising a fully functional document management system.
 - Accessing applications whilst away from the office using terminal services.
 - Utilising the various 3G cards from mobile phone companies to access system whilst away from the office – these are now cheaper to run than broad band was 3 years ago.
- If an SME is based in multiple locations deciding where to host data is problematic. This also complicates the installation of the server infrastructure by a factor of at least the number of locations the SME has. The cost of ownership of this solution is also significantly higher than a single server solution.
- An SME may want to share information on their systems with 3rd party suppliers/clients but are concerned about security of data that they don't want them to access and performance of their broadband connection.
- The SME is usually unable to provide the access to systems that a mobile workforce – such as sales people require and therefore provide processes that are slow, cumbersome and often duplicate effort so that systems can be updated with information in a timely manner.
- SME's have no resilience – typically they have one server and if that fails all systems go off until it can be fixed.
- SME's are concerned around licensing and compliance especially Microsoft licensing which is daunting for end users running separate Microsoft servers.

The Solution for SME's

The solution is YourOfficeAnywhere. Cardium have taken their vast knowledge of implementing Microsoft Infrastructures – Active Directory, Exchange clusters, SQL Server clusters, Microsoft Sharepoint, and Microsoft Terminal Server farms and designed a solution that will scale to support more than 10,000 users and placed this in a data centre in Manchester Science Park. SME's no longer need a small business server sat in their office. All an SME needs now is a decent broadband link (2mb or above) a computer or laptop and local office applications. The solution allows SME's to get on with running their business and forget the complexities of an in house server solution.

Benefits for SME's

- YourOfficeAnywhere is a monthly rental agreement where the SME pays for what they use each month. The server renewal and upgrade program is managed by YourOfficeAnywhere as and when required by Microsoft, or when Cardium deems that a particular product is mature enough to be used as a hosted product. The move to new back end systems is all part of this service.
- Email Anywhere uses Microsoft Exchange and the monthly license allows the end user to download to any number of PC's and devices therefore allowing the end user to see emails sent from one PC on another that they connect and authenticate to.
 - Provides access to email from their local PC using the latest Outlook version of software – upgrades to the latest copy of Outlook are allowed at any time and free of charge.
 - Provides web based email access to their email using Outlook Web Access.
 - Provides access to email using Windows Mobile devices.
 - Provides access to email using RIM Blackberry devices (there is an additional charge for this).
- Documents Anywhere uses Microsoft Sharepoint to access documents via web folders or an internet browser.
- Applications Anywhere allows the SME to access their line of business application anywhere there is a broadband link using Terminal Services. Each SME has a dedicated VMWare server allowing any application to be installed without affecting any other user of the physical server.
- Cardium are a Microsoft Gold partner who monitor and patch the server infrastructure 24 hours a day 365 days a year.
- The solution grows (and declines) as required by the SME. If they hire a new member of staff they identify the systems they need – email anywhere, documents anywhere or applications anywhere and we enable this for the new starter. Similarly if the SME loses a member of staff they inform us, we disable the account and no longer charge for that user from the following month. As an analogy an SME doesn't pre-order 1,000 gallons of water for a year, they turn the tap on and off and pay for it as used – YourOfficeAnywhere is the same.
- Startup costs are small (and the same goes for an SME replacing a server). Typically an SME who wants email anywhere, documents anywhere and access to a SQL based application for 5 users and including all Microsoft back end licenses costs around £32.00 per user per month which is only £1.00 per day for a business class computer system. For 5 users this is a startup cost of £480.00 which is 3 months upfront payment (recovered at the end of the contract if an SME wishes to terminate). Additionally for accounting purposes this can be seen as an Operational Expense rather than a Capital Expenses which has benefits from an accounting point of view.
- Our solution requires no special VPN connection to access any solution (this is the reason many work anywhere solutions fail because they are behind a firewall which won't allow a VPN connection out – we just use HTTP and the remote desktop port)– for applications they use the standard remote desktop application supplied by Microsoft and key in a web address, document management is accessed either by web folders (again available as standard on any Microsoft XP/Vista PC) or through a standard web browser. Email is accessed by a local copy of Outlook (using HTTPS) which is supplied or through a web browser.

- We perform all backups of data both locally and to another datacentre.
- Our solution works anywhere for any user with a broadband connection.
- The solution is in a secure data centre with battery UPS, diesel backup and air conditioning.
- The solution allows all SME employees to work smarter – e.g. at home, whilst on the road, and for the business owner when abroad allows him to keep in contact and check everything that is happening.
- Applications are hosted on a dedicated enterprise class VMWare server for each SME – the SME gets the benefit of enterprise class computing securely shared with other virtual servers. We monitor and tune each virtual server to ensure each SME gets the best performance at any time.
- The solution allows an SME to securely share their information with clients and suppliers using standard features available in the document management system.
- For SME's in multiple locations YourOfficeAnywhere is an obvious choice and “no brainer”!
- The solution is running multiple servers for logon's, is an exchange cluster for resilience and runs SQL mirroring for applications and Sharepoint ensuring the highest availability.
- The solution is a rented solution and we are authorised by Microsoft to rent licenses on their behalf – SME's no longer need to be concerned about complex and expensive Microsoft licenses.

What Do Our Customers think of the Solution?

“We're building a nationwide franchise – and YOA is the lynchpin

“We have taken an innovative approach to the way we take business people into schools to help pupils start to understand what makes business tick. It was an instant success with students, who relish the opportunity to get hands on with marketing, learn to work as a team and start to understand why we all need profit, and teachers are delighted with how we bring the Enterprise curriculum to life.

“Now the word is spreading, we're training agents to run Enterprise Challenge Days across the North West which is the cornerstone to developing a national franchise. The key to making it all work is communication.”

“We are a virtual organisation. We need to communicate effectively with our growing team of franchise agents and ensure the latest resource materials are available to them instantly as we constantly grow and improve our offerings. Email is only the start of it. The key to our smooth operation is having all resources available to the team from our central, securely-run YOA portal.”

“Your Office Anywhere allows us to function effectively without the worry or expense of setting up IT infrastructure.” Peter Dickinson, Director, E4A Ltd www.e4a.org.uk

“We received 5 tenders to host our core business applications – and YOA was the clear winner

“We are an energy management consultancy and urgently needed a dedicated server to run our own VB software systems – but with the added complication that our clients need to access data specific to them over a secure web portal.

"We are growing fast – currently 8 consultants each working from our home bases. Our library of technical data is growing even faster, so file sharing is critical.

"Cardium's hosted server solution continues to meet our growing data communication, sharing, security and storage requirements. It means we can deliver coherent solutions to our customers, even though our staff work from numerous locations across the UK.

"If you need professionally managed IT hosting, I strongly recommend you contact Cardium." Owen Jones, JRP Solutions Ltd www.jrpsolutions.com