Softcat

Case Study

Softcat's MDL service delivers a flexible, sustainable and cost-effective device solution for The Citation Group

Published

The client

The Citation Group supports over 125,000 small and medium-sized businesses worldwide, providing mission-critical compliance and quality services that help them thrive. Headquartered in Wilmslow, Cheshire, and powered by more than 1,700 professionals across the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, the Group blends personalised expertise with smart software solutions to act as a true partner to the businesses it serves. For more than 30 years, The Citation Group has been simplifying the complex parts of running a business. Its ecosystem of services spans HR and Health & Safety, workplace law, eLearning, wellbeing, accreditations such as ISO and SSIP, as well as newer solutions in cybersecurity, background screening, and sustainability.

Key facts

1 Compliance and business services partner to 125,000+ SMEs globally.

2 1,700+ colleagues across the UK, Australia, New Zealand & Canada.

3 Provider of HR, H&S, e-learning, wellbeing, accreditations, cybersecurity & sustainability solutions.

The challenge

The Citation Group was having problems with onboarding new starters and effectively managing multiple devices in its geographically dispersed business. Its existing device estate was sourced from multiple providers. It led to delays with delivering devices and equipment bundles, including peripherals like keyboards and mice. As well as disrupting the onboarding process, it was creating significant additional work for The Citation Group's small in-house IT team, which was tasked with configuring devices and ensuring they were fit for purpose.

Ongoing issues, ranging from delayed deliveries to non or incorrectly functioning devices, created multiple tickets for The Citation Group's first, second, and third-line service desk and often resulted in individual devices being handled on three or four occasions. As devices aged, faults became more prevalent, and the service desk team needed to direct extensive resources simply to maintaining a functional device estate.

Similar issues were evident when employees left the business. Often, devices weren't returned or were in such poor condition they were unable to be repurposed for use by other employees. Improving the service became a priority. The Citation Group wanted to significantly reduce the impact on its IT team and ensure that new starters would have the right equipment in place to be productive from day one. It was also keen to ensure they enjoyed an optimal onboarding experience to illustrate how much The Citation Group values employees. Ensuring it was able to efficiently track and retrieve devices from people leaving the business was also a priority.

Critical success factors

- A significant increase in storage capacity to handle growing genomic datasets.
- High-performance infrastructure to support complex genetic evaluations and HPC workloads.
- On-time delivery and installation to meet strict programme deadlines.

The Solution

The Citation Group contacted its existing device providers for help. One provider offered a solution for laptop provision, but it lacked the capacity to fulfil The Citation Group's bundle requirements or handle existing stock and leavers at the volumes required. The Citation Group had sourced some of its existing devices through Softcat and got in touch to investigate a potential solution.

"Softcat told us about its Managed Device Lifecycle (MDL) service and how we could use it to fulfil the process for providing device bundles for our new starters and retrieving kit from leavers. We did a trial run, processing some new starter and leaver tickets through Softcat and doing the rest in house. Feedback from colleagues using the Softcat service was extremely positive. It struck a chord and helped us realise that our in-house team would struggle to compete with Softcat's MDL service." - Lee Littler, Group IT Director, The Citation Group

Softcat's MDL Service delivers a personalised end-to-end device lifecycle solution covering the new starters, swaps and leavers process, alongside Service Desk, delivery and customer support services. It includes:

- Managed logistics service - ensures the right device bundles are delivered, or retrieved, at the right time.
- Device lifecycle service – helps to maximise device lifecycle through refurbishment and re-use.
- Responsible disposal - obsolete devices undergo a three-pass NCSC-certified wipe and WEEE compliant disposal.

"In the months we've been using the MDL service, our colleagues have expressed high satisfaction with it," said Lee. "It's helping us extend the life of our device estate and ensures our colleagues have the flexibility they need to work effectively from any location. We've been working with Softcat on a Windows 11 migration across our entire device estate too. User satisfaction is high, we've had next to no complaints during the transition, and its potentially one of the most successful projects we've ever done.

"As a business, we like to think of ourselves as partners, not providers. Softcat thinks the same way and is willing to understand how we work and step up to the plate at times of high demand, such as a sales drive, to help match our needs. While we knew other vendors could deliver, we don't believe they could match Softcat's all round capabilities."

Solution highlights

- Managed Device Lifecycle service covering new starters, swaps and leavers.
- Extensive support services.
- Reduction in impact on in-house IT Service Desk.

The benefits

> "It's enabling our service Desk Team to spend time refurbishing existing devices and extend their lifecycle from three to five years. Devices we would normally have retired from use can now be updated through the MDL service and be almost as good as new. It's helping reduce waste, deliver ongoing cost savings, and because colleagues get an updated, Windows 11 device that works from day one, improving end user satisfaction."
>
> Lee Littler
> Group IT Director, The Citation Group

Softcat's MDL service is enabling The Citation Group's Service Desk to concentrate on providing a high level of service to its users and support operational improvements. It has significantly reduced the workload associated with managing new starters, swaps and leavers, enabling more time to be spent improving the device estate as a whole.

"User complaints and tickets associated with new starter's devices are very rare since we implemented the service," said Lee. "It's enabling our service Desk Team to spend time refurbishing existing devices and extend their lifecycle from three to five years. Devices we would normally have retired from use can now be updated through the MDL service and be almost as good as new. It's helping reduce waste, deliver ongoing cost savings, and because colleagues get an updated, Windows 11 device that works from day one, improving end user satisfaction."

Implementing Softcat's MDL service has also significantly increased efficiency in other areas and provided The Citation Group with the flexibility it needs to respond to business demand.

"In the past, device retrieval from colleagues leaving the business was negligible, with as little as 30% success rate," said Lee. "There were multiple reasons for this poor performance, but since we started working with Softcat it's much better managed and we have above 90% success with retrievals. SLAs on our ticket responses have significantly improved, thanks to having more capacity from our Service Desk team, and we're also eliminating the cost associated with multiple device touchpoints and the associated logistics expense.

"Softcat is also extremely responsive to our changing needs. If we have a recruitment or sales drive, we're confident in its ability to react quickly and ensure we can meet demand, often involving as many as 50 devices on a single day. The service also helps us meet our obligations from an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) perspective, being much more sustainable and reducing our environmental impact.

"We have a caring culture at The Citation Group and the improvement in user satisfaction, made possible by the service, is probably the most valuable benefit. We're convinced that enabling our colleagues to start off on the right foot and work with high-performing devices will help to improve colleague satisfaction, reduce churn and a make a positive first impression of the business."

Benefits at a glance

- Improved, Windows 11 device estate.
- Reduction in user complaints and repair tickets.
- Enhanced staff satisfaction.

Why Softcat

"At The Citation Group, we have strategically chosen Softcat as our partner for managed device lifecycle services due to their outstanding breadth and quality in offerings." Said Lee.

"Our collaboration with Softcat has flourished into a robust working relationship, underpinned by their comprehensive MDL services that cover every facet of device management-from provisioning and logistics to refurbishment, re-use, and responsible disposal. This partnership brings the flexibility and resilience essential for our complex, global operations. What sets Softcat apart is their dedication to understanding our business, our people, and our needs, enabling them to tailor solutions that align seamlessly with our priorities. Over time, this relationship has blossomed into a trusted partnership, characterised by responsiveness, reliability, and a shared commitment to empowering our colleagues for success."