

SUPPORTING THEIR IT ESTATE

Founded in 1977 by Lee Watts and Philip King, Kinleigh Folkard and Hayward (KFH) is one of London's leading estate agents.

KFH started life as a property management company before opening its first estate agency office in Putney in 1984. Since then, KFH has grown to become a group of some 50 offices servicing the residential, commercial, investment and development property markets in London.

In addition to sales and letting of properties, KFH provides a comprehensive range of services including financial services (with onsite mortgage advisors), new homes for sale in London and across the UK, commercial property for rent and sale, surveying, conveyancing and property management.

With its head office in Wimbledon and employing nearly 500 people, KFH has also introduced the 'Completely London' branding – a London wide marketing initiative developed to reinforce KFH's leading market position. "Completely London means three things," explained KFH's Marketing Director, Paul Masters. "It's the complete range of property services we offer; it reinforces KFH as an integral part of the London landscape and it shows that we have complete knowledge of the capital and the local property market."

The Challenge

As is the case with most organisations with a large number of offices and both office-based and remote staff, maintaining hundreds of PCs and laptops can become challenging. Traditionally, KFH has adopted an outsourced approach to maintaining and supporting its hardware estate, which frees up the company's internal IT department to concentrate its expertise on more business critical projects such as website development and maintenance, project development and implementation and ensuring the on-going availability of the network infrastructure.

"Our internal IT department also includes two help desk specialists," explained Rob Luppino, KFH's IT Manager. "However, over the years their role has gradually evolved to include information and knowledge management support as well."

Information and knowledge management is an extremely important aspect of KFH's business. Almost since its inception, KFH began to amass detailed information about London's property markets and with the launch of Completely London, which draws in, entertains and informs customers throughout London, the company has seen a substantial increase in the amounts of important information that it holds.

"The management of information requires specialist knowledge of our company, its business and procedures," continued Rob. "It simply would not be efficient or effective to outsource these services and with increasing demands on our internal help desk, it made sound economic sense to outsource the maintenance and support of our PCs and printers, whilst alleviating this pressure from our internal team."

KFH had already partnered with Softcat for the provision of IT services. "Some time ago we decided to review our Microsoft software licensing policies," said Rob. "We approached Microsoft who highly recommended Softcat." Following a groupwide review of KFH's existing and future requirements, Softcat recommended practice and procedure changes that ensured KFH got the most from its IT budget and gave the company the reassurance that it was totally compliant with Microsoft's licensing policies.

"Softcat's knowledge of Microsoft licensing helped us reduce our costs without affecting our ability to deliver the services that our customers expected," continued Rob. "Since then, our two organisations have worked more closely together and when the help desk issues arose, it made sense for us to invite Softcat for their proposal."

The Solution

"Softcat's recommendation was for a permanent onsite engineer to be based out of KFH's head office, backed up by an externally managed help desk service, contactable by phone, e-mail and via the Web. "Softcat's help desk is the first point of contact for any hardware related problem," explained Andrew Pitt, Account Manager at Softcat. "If the problem cannot be resolved remotely, the onsite engineer is dispatched to the particular KFH office, pre-armed with the necessary knowledge and replacement parts."

"This solution works extremely well," added Rob. "We have a very good relationship with Softcat who have always met our SLAs."

In addition to responding to specific incidents, the onsite engineer also provides regular housekeeping and preventative maintenance services across all of KFH's offices, helping to ensure that PCs, laptops and printers remain operational. "Softcat's on-site engineer also supports our internal help desk staff with hardware maintenance and support issues," continued Rob.

The partnership between Softcat and KFH continues to grow. With some 50 offices throughout London, KFH and Softcat are now reviewing branch IT infrastructure and evaluating alternative options to upgrade the group-wide network. "We want to streamline and improve our network and connectivity, so that information can be more readily accessed," said Rob. "We also want to reduce our carbon footprint and we are working with Softcat to determine how both objectives can best be achieved."

Key Facts

- 30 year history in property management
- Now employs 500 staff
- 50 offices across London
- Covering all aspects of property management from renting to financial services
- Reputation for quality, friendly service

Benefits

- Fast SLAs and fix times
- Mix of onsite and offsite support gives the perfect blend of expertise
- Flexible end-user support delivered via email, web and phone

Critical Success Factors

- Outsource of helpdesk function to release internal resources for more essential tasks
- Take over routine maintenance functions of PC's and printer devices