



SOFTCAT ON CUE FOR TECHNOLOGY SOURCING

XL Video is a multi-award winning provider of video equipment and services to Concert Touring, Theatre & The Arts, Corporate, Indoor and Outdoor Events, and Television. They guarantee the creativity and full technical support to put together cutting-edge video solutions for some of the most innovative and aesthetically daring shows in the world. With offices across Europe and the US they have an enviable track record supporting a multitude of world renowned artists and shows including U2, Jamiroquai, The Spice Girls and Muse.

The Challenge

Complex video equipment of the kind used in the shows that XL video arrange is underpinned by a lot of IT equipment – cables, switches, hard drives, PCs and Macs are all required in quantity to make the events possible. Every show is assigned a project manager responsible for bringing everything needed together on time for the client including sourcing the necessary IT. Richard Burford, Technical Director at XL Video, explains, "Events suffered from uncoordinated purchasing, with different project managers going to different suppliers, using different credit cards and procuring different equipment for each job. The result was a supply chain that was in no way harmonised or making best use of procurement efficiencies whilst the effects impacted the final service we delivered to our clients."

Softcat, long time software provider to XL Video, believed there was a better way to meet these technology needs and proposed an alternative solution to overcome the challenges.

The Solution

Gez Hatton, Account Manager at Softcat, picks up the story, "We felt that through our vast distributor and partner network we could come up with a better way for XL Video to work when it came to acquiring the technology needed for its events. We are very experienced in providing sourcing programmes to our customers to meet even the most demanding timescales or technology requirements. That's what we put to XL Video - a single phone number and email to source practically any piece of IT equipment they would need."

Before committing to the programme however, XL Video wanted to trial Softcat on a typical project and the sourcing they would be tasked with. Gez Hatton continues, "Our first project was to source some hard to come by Apple servers. It was a tough one as they were old servers which had proven a headache for other partners to find, however we found what they needed which meant XL Video met important deadlines for the show they were working on at the time."

Since this first project, things have snowballed to the point that now Softcat is the defacto procurement channel for XL Video's project managers, enabling them to source every item of kit required to make the events happen.

Richard Burford remarks, "We needed someone we could trust so that when we call, stuff happens quickly as our timescales can be aggressive. We also needed advice so our Project Managers didn't waste time trying to come up with all the answers themselves – Softcat are the experts so we now defer to them. The result is, transactions are now occurring daily in support of our projects."

Softcat has now proved itself, delivering a wide array of technology to meet the needs of XL Video and its' clients. Gez Hatton explains, "We have delivered all sorts of technology from standard things like USB hubs to more exotic technology like rack mount PCs which have proved particularly difficult for XL Video to source in the past. We now have these custom built for each show as they're needed."

The Benefits

Softcat represents a single source for virtually any item of IT equipment XL Video needs. Fast response times, accurate quotations, technical presales and outstanding post sales support is the cornerstone of the service. What's more, everything is delivered at market leading rates.

Perhaps most importantly though, is the sourcing programme which ensures XL Video has the ability to track costs accurately. Richard Burford comments, "We can now track PO numbers and invoices via our internal purchasing system, eliminating countless cost centres and distributed IT procurement which led to spiralling project costs. Working with Softcat means we leverage economies of scale in our purchasing and have access to real-time stock availability. We therefore get our hands on the products we need much faster."

With rogue purchasing a thing of the past, Softcat has also been able to help harmonise the choice of equipment used across all projects so if one project manager purchases a particular item, Softcat makes sure the same product is recommended the next time something similar is requested by someone else. With kit lists similar across projects, this expedites requirements faster and means there is an element of uniformity across projects and the spares that are carried by XL Video for their events.

Summary

The sourcing programme has helped XL Video focus their attention on the services they are commissioned to deliver, rather than worrying about IT sourcing and dealing with multiple suppliers to determine what products are needed from whom and by when.

Richard Burford summarises, "Our deadlines are absolute - the show won't wait. When we say we need it on Monday and it turns up on Tuesday, you can have it back as that's simply not good enough. Softcat understand our business, our timescales and our IT requirements and through sound advice and super response times we have the perfect mix to help make sure we are never in that position."

Thanks to the great service that Softcat has shown delivering the sourcing programme, the partnership has gone from strength to strength. XL Video has also solicited Softcat's support on a number of other internal based IT projects including Mac deployments, Windows security projects, Active Directory assistance and a Citrix solution to deliver CRM via XenApp over the WAN.

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Richard Burford, Technical Director
XL VIDEO

Key Facts

- Multi-award winning provider of video equipment for events and shows
- Supporting rock concerts, television and outdoor events
- Offices in 6 countries across Europe and US

Critical Success Factors

- Stop rogue purchasing
- Improve technology supply chain
- Get better procurement efficiencies

Solutions Highlights

- Single phone number and email to source any item of IT equipment
- Expertise and advice from traditional to more exotic IT requirements

At a Glance

- Central point of supply

- Faster response times
- Market leading rates
- Accurate cost reporting
- Harmonised technology