



Strategic IT partnership provides MRN with foundation for global growth

A niche provider of clinical trial services to the pharmaceutical industry had been operating a hybrid IT Infrastructure and Support model since it was founded in 2006. Supported in some part by Bluecube for most of this time, a planned year-on-year growth rate of over 25 percent drove the realisation that it needed a more strategic IT partnership with serious senior muscle to support its global growth ambitions.

Founded in 2006, the MRN is a market leading specialist in community based trials. The MRN is a Clinical Trial Support Organisation (CTSO) operating through three key service lines: Home Trial Support; Site Professional Support and Bespoke services, which is designed to solve complex and unique problems for its customers, often through R&D.

Simon Mouncer, Vice President Finance at MRN says by reducing the burden on the patient, the MRN's services directly and significantly support recruitment onto and retention throughout a trial, thereby directly enabling drugs to get to market more quickly.

Significant annual growth

MRN's biggest challenge, and opportunity, is growth. The company has been growing by over 30% a year since 2006. *"That's a significant growth curve and the strategy is to continue with this level of growth for the foreseeable future. As such we have a major reliance on our IT environment to support our growth plans."*

"We're a service organization. So, if we don't have an absolutely robust, reliable and secure IT infrastructure, and a highly effective and responsive support operation it's going to seriously undermine both the service we provide to our customers and also our ability to grow. Every company says that, but it's particularly true for us."

A global player

MRN is a global company that requires the same level of service everywhere. Our IT infrastructure and support must be of a consistently high standard to serve the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse global employee base.

MRN has over 180 employees based worldwide and while traditionally MRN utilised only 3rd party nurses from its

vendor network, they have now evolved the model to include an increasing number of 'employed' nurses. *"We're a global player delivering home visits in the vast majority of countries. We have office locations in the UK, US, Spain, Germany – and will open others in the next few years. We need an IT provider who can support us wherever we operate."*

"Both MRN and Bluecube had clear thoughts about how to make a step change in the (MRN) IT Infrastructure and Support model. It was unnervingly joined up when we started to talk."

Simon Mouncer, MRN Vice President - Finance

Wanted senior IT muscle

MRN undertook a strategic review of its IT requirements and decided that continuing with the hybrid approach would not provide the optimal solution to support its growth plans. So MRN approached Bluecube about entering into a formal strategic partnership.

"I knew outsourcing was right for us. But we wanted to have an onsite team, and also have regular access to some senior IT muscle. We did not want an arrangement where we felt that the only connection was when one of our employees called the service desk."

"Best practice would have been to undertake a formal RFI. But, as Bluecube knew MRN and had some track record, we agreed to give them six months to establish a clear 'Infrastructure and Support' strategy and to put in place an onsite support team underpinned by a credible Client Director."

Manage third-party providers

Bluecube look after all the IT Infrastructure and Support, including telephony, hardware procurement and software licencing for MRN. *"We outsource everything to Bluecube. They manage all our third-party providers, negotiating renewals and contracts on our behalf. We know what we need from a business perspective, but we're not experts at negotiating software arrangements or mobile phone contracts and don't want to be."*

Hit the deck running

MRN had already invested heavily in IT infrastructure, with in some cases Bluecube's involvement. *"We needed Bluecube to now take complete ownership and accountability to ensure that we were going to get the benefit from all this investment. We also needed them to ensure that future investments were directed in the most appropriate way."*

"I needed Bluecube to hit the deck running. Pick it up very quickly. Get an on-site team established and put an IT Client Director in place. I wanted them to operate at the level I wanted and crucially to build a strong and effective relationship with me and become part of MRN."

Secure critical trial data

These days all companies would say that their data needs to be totally secure. But in the life sciences environment, clinical trial data is particularly sensitive and highly confidential. Data security is critical. *"We're regularly audited by customers auditors, who want to know more and more about the security of the infrastructure and data. So again, we need hundred percent confidence in Bluecube's ability to provide a totally secure IT environment for us, including robust business continuity processes."*

Build a strong partnership

The two companies have built a very good partnership. *"People don't ever feel they're dealing with a company that's a completely different culture or doesn't get MRN. I think a key part of that is the fact that we have an onsite team. An onsite team helps build those relationships. When there's a problem they can go and see someone. People appreciate that."*

Respond with empathy

MRN want an IT infrastructure that's reliable and robust. *"Want to turn it on, get quick and easy access to data and files – so it just needs to work every time. It is critical to operating efficiently and to being productive. It doesn't get in the way of doing the job. People know that problems occur and that the world's not perfect. But, when they log a problem, they want immediate empathy. For someone to get it's causing them issues in doing their job. And, to resolve that problem quickly."*

Senior Management Commitment

While MRN wanted an onsite support team, they also needed the active input of senior IT expertise and not just someone who was only connected with MRN when they called. A provider that makes the connection between IT and the organization. *"That's the challenge for anything you outsource. Our IT Client Director's key to that. Has a seat at the table for strategy meetings, so knows where we're going."*

"From the outset, Bluecube set a really strong image of a senior management team that was really serious about making a real difference. Sorting out what was a real problem. And they're delivering on that."

Help deliver the strategy

MRN feel that Bluecube isn't a faceless provider who doesn't care, but have slotted into how MRN operate. *"Bluecube's genuinely committed to not only maintaining but improving what we've got. They WANT to be an integral and key part of ensuring we deliver our strategy."*

"If the IT infrastructure got in the way, then we would underdeliver to our customers. We would also have people who're less productive and could not deliver to a high standard. This could undermine employee satisfaction with consequential adverse impact on recruitment and retention. It's that important"

"Could I say it would stop us growing our top line, maybe not. But it would make it harder to grow and harder to do business. If the IT infrastructure isn't reliable and, if say, onboarding people was difficult, it just gets in the way. And we're moving really, really, really fast - so we don't have time for things to get in the way."

Service permeates everything

The thing that strikes MRN about Bluecube is that it's a service company. *"The first contact is always very positive. They behave like they get that it's all about service and relationships. That's permeated through the organization."*

MRN conclude that the biggest benefits of working with Bluecube is having a fully outsourced service and not a hybrid model. Having an onsite IT team and an IT client director for strategic insight and decision making. But crucially, having Bluecube well-connected into what MRN are looking to achieve.

"Bluecube's a very important part of our foundation for growth. I wouldn't be working with someone who I didn't think could support us with that requirement both now and in the future."

Simon Mouncer, MRN Vice President - Finance



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