

The heat is on! Wood Energy chooses GCC to supply and support Microsoft Office 365 and Sage 200



When Gloucestershire-based Wood Energy needed a new IT system, they wanted it fast. The biomass heating & renewables specialist was setting-up operations from scratch in an entirely new location and time was of the essence. Wood Energy chose GCC as their business partner to specify and support a new IT system and to manage the transition and transfer of records from the previous IT system which was deeply embedded within a large multinational organisation. The company is now fired up for growth and is delivering against its continued ambitious growth plans.

Industry-leading expertise in biomass heating systems

Wood Energy is a leading specialist supplier and installer of high efficiency automatic wood heating systems throughout the UK and Ireland. The biomass heating systems supplied by the business provide all sectors (including offices, schools, hospitals and factories) with highly efficient renewable energy.

After a change of company ownership in June 2013, Wood Energy became part of the Strong Energy group, with plans to operate a nationwide operation from a new location in South Gloucestershire. The company wanted to continue to use and extend its Sage 200 accounting software, originally supplied and supported by GCC, but also had a pressing need for an entirely new IT system to be more accommodating of remote working and real time activities.

Jeremy Margetson, Group Financial Controller (Wood Energy), 'This was a really important business decision for us. Not only did it represent a substantial and much needed investment, but with 50% of our staff working remotely, it was essential that a new state-of-the-art IT system should be at the core of our business.'

After speaking with a number of potential IT suppliers, Wood Energy chose GCC. 'In the end it was a simple decision', said Jeremy Margetson. 'Our expertise needs to be oriented towards being the best in wood heating systems and our business recognised as the University for biomass. For us to keep the focus in the right areas, we needed an IT business partner, not just a supplier, who would go the extra mile and have a "whatever it takes" approach. It was clear that GCC had listened to us, understood our business and provided a detailed review that met our needs. They also had all the expertise necessary to specify, install and support the best possible IT solutions.'

GCC supply and support Sage 200 and Microsoft Office 365

GCC's first job was to ensure that Wood Energy could continue to use Sage 200, the market-leading accounting and financial software they had been using at their previous location. This involved migrating system files and data from the previous location to new Sage 200 software set up by GCC at Wood Energy's new location. 'It was crucial that we were able to continue our normal business processes with the minimum of disruption. GCC did a great job,' said Jeremy Margetson.

As a Microsoft strategic partner for 20 years, GCC were well-placed to work with Wood Energy to specify, install and support Microsoft Office 365. This enables access over the internet – or via the ‘cloud’ as this is often called - to well-known Microsoft Office tools such as Word, PowerPoint and Excel, with Outlook for email, SharePoint for document management and Skype for Business.

Wood Energy now benefit from improved efficiency, collaboration and communications. It is now possible to share information across sites, to work remotely from any location on any device and also from home.

The move to ‘the cloud’ also has other benefits. As the business grows, it is easy and cost-effective to add new users or upgrade software. And importantly, the cloud provides a safe and secure location for all company data, with automatic back-up and guaranteed data security.

However, before that could be done, it was vital that email data was extracted from the outdated IT system at the offices of Wood Energy’s previous corporate owner and migrated to the new system. As the two businesses were in the process of separating, this presented a set of unique challenges, forcing GCC to be ‘quite ingenious’, says Margetson.

GCC support – the power behind Wood Energy’s IT

Wood Energy also retained the services of GCC to provide support for the new IT system and Sage 200, once they had been installed. As the systems are critical to the smooth and efficient running of the business, reliability and continuity are essential.

‘We’re not IT experts ourselves so we needed the reassurance that we had IT specialists readily available to support our operation, records and some sensitive data’, said Jeremy

Margetson. ‘GCC support means we can relax, safe in the knowledge that our IT will always be stable, fully-functioning and up to date – without us having to do a thing. And if there is a problem, or we just need hand-holding, we have expertise on tap. It also means that I can get on with my day job!’

The GCC support service provided to Wood Energy provides them with four main areas of support:

- Pro-active remote management of Sage 200 and monitoring of PCs and servers via the cloud, including always up-to-date patches, updates and anti-virus software.
- A Helpdesk staffed by trained IT professionals, accessible by telephone, email and online.
- Monthly management reporting on all aspects of the company’s IT
- Management of all IT contracts and warranties

Wood Energy: fired up for growth

Wood Energy has ambitious growth plans and within the first year after the transition the business has doubled its sales. Having a new IT system that met its business needs was an important factor. For example, with 50% of its staff working remotely in sales and engineering, cloud-based Office 365 has been a crucial factor in improving efficiency, communication, collaboration and access to documents with large file sizes.

GCC’s 20-year relationship with Microsoft as a strategic partner was a real benefit to Wood Energy. ‘This means that we now have one point of contact and do not have to deal with Microsoft ourselves as we did with previous IT support companies. This makes things easier and more efficient for us’, says Jeremy Margetson.

“ We needed an IT business partner, not just a supplier who would go the extra mile and have a “whatever it takes” approach. ”

Jeremy Margetson
Group Financial Controller,
Wood Energy

The flexibility of Office 365 has also been a boon. Growth means continued change – like new email addresses, new staff and new domain names. ‘We are quite demanding but GCC always respond to our demands quickly,’ adds Jeremy.

GCC support has also proved its value. The unique technology that allows GCC to operate in the background, carrying out remote pro-active management and monitoring, ensures that Wood Energy’s IT is always working and up to date. ‘This means that no news is good news and everything just keeps running smoothly,’ says Jeremy.

When there have been problems, GCC have responded promptly. ‘This is pivotal to our goals and aspirations’, says Jeremy Margetson. ‘When you’re supplying boilers to schools, hospitals and care homes, you’ve got to respond fast. GCC have been extremely responsive and flexible and what’s more, their telephone manner is exceptional. I know most of the team by first name now and the fact that they’re just down the road provides an added level of reassurance.’

In fact, he concludes, ‘The relationship that we have with GCC is really important – not what you might expect from an IT company. The IT expertise is important – we know we can throw anything at GCC - but the business understanding, customer service and human touch are what really make the difference. I’d certainly recommend GCC to anyone.’



Business led, technology driven, people centric

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