itlab

From Legacy Systems to Microsoft Dynamics GP: IT Lab Delivers Time Critical Transition to Keep the Trams Running

Summary:

Client: KeolisAmey Metrolink

Sector: Public Transport

Company Size: Revenues of circa £60 million, 1,500 staff

IT Lab Dedicated Staff: Three team members based at KeolisAmey's Metrolink offices and six remote IT staff

Key Technologies: Microsoft Dynamics GP, Managed Services, Agility (third-party asset management tool), Cloudlab, MPLS (connectivity solution)

IT Lab Services Provided: Managed Services, Microsoft Dynamics GP, Cloudlab, Connectivity (MPLS)

Background: In January 2017, Keolis, a France-based operator of passenger transport systems, and Amey, a UK-based provider of infrastructure support services, jointly won the Transport for Greater Manchester contract to run its Metrolink tram system for up to 10 years.

The terms of the deal meant that until the contract's live date, the consortium's access to the Metrolink's infrastructure and data was extremely limited.

A complete switchover from legacy systems managed by the incumbent provider to a new Microsoft Dynamics GP solution was scheduled for 2am on the 15th of July 2017. Despite the access constraints, it was vital the transition was seamless.

Project Goal:

To enable KeolisAmey to operate the Greater Manchester Metrolink from day one, while simultaneously managing the transition to a new ERP solution without service loss or disruption.

> "IT Lab's team was candid, responsive, and quickly built our trust. Having chosen them as our Microsoft Dynamics GP provider, we recognised they had the expertise to support us in other vital areas. We extended the GP contract to include deployment to IT Lab's cloud environment, Cloudlab, plus MPLS connectivity and managed services."
>
> Geoff Bishop, Head of IT - KeolisAmey Metrolink

The Client:

Keolis is a highly respected global passenger transport business. Amey is a leading supplier of consulting and infrastructure support services both in the UK and internationally.

The Greater Manchester Metrolink tram system is the largest of its kind in the UK, serving 93 stops along almost 100km of track. Its fleet of 120 trams caters for more than 34 million journeys a year.
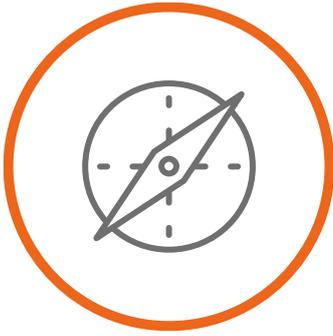
Navigate:

Defining Challenges and Opportunities

To help KeolisAmey develop robust systems to support Metrolink, IT Lab:

- Specified and configured Microsoft Dynamics GP, ensuring that it integrated effectively with the Metrolink's existing asset management software, Agility.
- Devised a roadmap for migrating all Metrolink's systems to Cloudlab, to simplify management and improve performance.
- Worked closely with the company to ensure that all systems were fit for purpose and delivered to a strict, non-negotiable deadline.

"KeolisAmey approached us to tender for the contract to implement Dynamics GP initially," says David Mackay, Enterprise Applications Business Development Manager at IT Lab. "However, our experience and credentials delivering end-to-end IT managed services and complex infrastructure and application projects led to a deeper partnership. We have a huge depth of knowledge, not only in enterprise applications, but in cloud computing, managed services and connectivity. We understood their business needs better because of this."

Integrate:

Delivering Infrastructure and Operations

To deliver the systems and infrastructure to underpin Metrolink, IT Lab:

- Established a multi-faceted team, drawing on skills across IT Lab, to ensure that all elements of the contract were thoroughly addressed and the project ran to time.
- Configured the Cloudlab environment and populated it with KeolisAmey's chosen applications. This created an environment that was as close to live as possible prior to the switchover.
- Implemented an MPLS (multi-protocol label switching) network to connect Metrolink's main offices and depots and provide a fast and dependable communications platform.

"The key reason we were able to deliver a sizeable and complex project on time, even with the added constraints around access, is that our teams worked as one. We have the resources and capacity to handle all things IT: our infrastructure, managed services and applications teams collaborated closely throughout," says MacKay. "We scheduled regular internal conversations and meetings – and shared the same documents and information – to consistently deliver high quality support to our client."
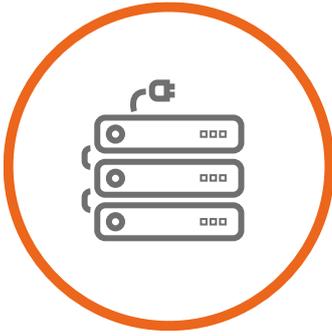
Operate:

Making it Happen

To ensure the Metrolink transition was successful, IT Lab:

- Assembled a team of project managers and senior engineers to work day and night during the weekend of the switchover, with extra resources on hand post the go-live date to respond swiftly to any additional needs. Owing to IT Lab's careful project management, there were no unforeseen issues.
- Devised an exhaustive security plan so that the Metrolink's data was secure during the migration from the incumbent provider's systems to the newly established infrastructure.
- Continues to provide Metrolink with ongoing support services for a smooth and uninterrupted business operation.

"As we'd done an immense amount of work in preparation, the actual system switchover was quite straightforward," says Mackay. "By the morning of July 17th, the whole process was complete."

"Until the contract's live date, our access to the Metrolink's infrastructure was limited. Whilst this was accepted protocol in the circumstances, we had to be cognisant of the potential technical challenges this presented. The new environment, together with the integration of Microsoft Dynamics GP and Agility, needed to run seamlessly from literally the minute we took ownership. The knowledge and dedication of IT Lab's team were instrumental in meeting the exacting standards demanded by Metrolink as soon as the clock started ticking.

Geoff Bishop, Head of IT - KeolisAmey Metrolink