

CASE STUDY



COMPANY
The Lowry



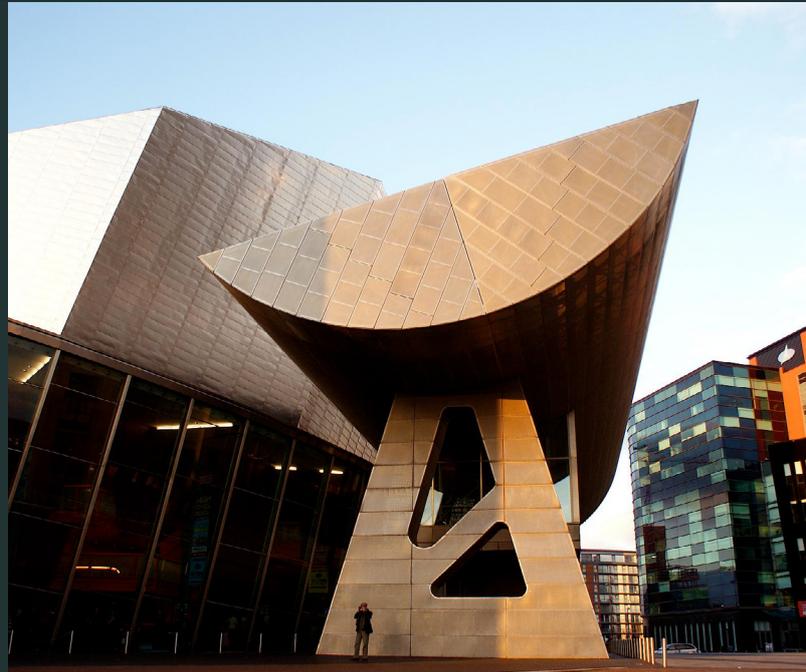
INDUSTRY
Arts and culture



THE PROBLEM
Poorly specified and complicated storage interface, which was unable to support 150 staff and HR, booking, email and archive systems.



THE SOLUTION
High storage capacity server and on-site redundancy backup for peace of mind, performance and added value, all while saving considerable money.



World renowned Art Gallery and theatre turns to Starcom for server upgrade and support.

The Lowry's 'vision is to be the most successful Arts Venue in the world' and they rely heavily upon their IT infrastructure to enable them to succeed.



With only two IT staff, who between them are responsible for everything from conferences and exhibitions to onsite Wi-Fi, online bookings and even HR, it is of the utmost importance to the Lowry that their IT systems just work, and that the requisite specialist support for certain aspects of their infrastructure is available.

Starcom had been providing IT support and technical guidance to the Lowry for eight years for various elements of the systems they used. One area that Starcom didn't provide support for, though, was the

organisation's Storage Area Network (SAN) server. The SAN server and support package that accompanied it had been specified in 2012 and ran a virtualised environment to cope with email, storage, domain controllers and a variety of databases, including the HR system, booking system and perhaps most importantly the archive at L.S Lowry works. Netapp was the system specified.

In January 2015, the Lowry began to experience difficulties with their server and their incumbent support provider.

Darren Mullin, IT Manager at the Lowry, recalls:

"Right from the off there had been issues with the Netapp solution. The company who had provided us with the system hadn't specified it quite to our requirements and hadn't set it up to provide us with the services we needed; leaving us with a system whose interface was overcomplicated and didn't have the amount of storage we required."

"Effectively the company who sold us the system, painted a picture that turned out to be something of a fabrication. It was very small in terms of storage; only 2Tb. The storage on the server should have been enough for the whole organisation to use, but within weeks it became apparent that there wasn't enough storage capacity."

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Having been sold a system that wasn't able to cope with the requirements of the Lowry's 150 staff, when their three year support contract came to an end, it proved very difficult to get a quote to continue to provide support from the incumbent provider. When they finally did get costs, they were very high.

Darren continues: “The company that sold us the system only seemed to care about selling us the product and they just expected us to buy a new one when it's three years old.”

The Lowry don't have the budget to buy a new system every three years and they also didn't feel that the support they had received had been up to the standard required. So, Darren turned to Starcom to see if they could offer an alternative.

“We've worked with Starcom for many years and when we contacted them and asked if there was anything they could do, they offered us a support package equivalent to the one we previously had, at a much more favourable price, via a partner. As a result, Darren opted to go with Starcom for the Netapp support.

Darren and the Lowry enjoyed an extension of their already close relationship with Starcom. As such, they were hugely pleased, but not entirely surprised, when Starcom took a proactive approach and suggested that, having looked at the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), they would be able to provide a new server and direct support package that would be considerably cheaper and have far greater storage capacity.

Starcom suggested a switch to a Dell Equallogic server which offered an upgrade from 2Tb storage to 18Tb, more straightforward management and direct support from Starcom's Equallogic accredited technicians.

Darren says: “Not only did switching the system make sense in terms of the kit actually being fit for purpose and easier for us to manage, but we get 18Tb compared to 2Tb we had previously. We also get the support of Starcom themselves - who know Equallogic inside out - so we get the added confidence that provides. It's also cost neutral in comparison to the Netapp support so we get new equipment and a host of other benefits for the same price, which is obviously a huge positive for us.”

Starcom managed the migration from the Netapp system to the new server with the minimum downtime. All of the Lowry's systems now operate from the new Equallogic server, they also have an onsite redundancy which the Dell Equallogic system backs everything up to in case the unthinkable should happen. With everything now stored in the same place, much more storage and a migration that was managed brilliantly, Darren has particular praise for Starcom's Senior Engineer who managed the process:

“When they recommended a new system that would save us money we were really pleased. The switch over went really smoothly and there was no data lost. Marcus, the senior engineer, was brilliant throughout and everything you could imagine that we need is now stored on this new server.”

For Darren, whilst the necessity to switch from Netapp was an unforeseen inconvenience, the services Starcom provided were excellent and the end result for the Lowry is ideal:

“From the outset, Starcom have been open and honest with us. Unlike other companies we've worked with, they want what is best for us, not what is best for them. They make sure that the systems we use suit us, work for us; both technically and financially, and they provide post installation support services that are second to none.”

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