Case Study

HO2 - Commercial Property Consultants

Rod Hayler, Managing Director HO2 (Brighton) Ltd

Like many privately-run companies HO2 started life in a garret room, but not many carry the South Molton Street, London W1K postcode.

In 1990 Rod Hayler and Charles Osborne, chartered surveyors, started small, with a solid client base, and joined their surveying and property investment agency roots to offer a niche practice as Hayler Osborne. The portfolio under management grew with Aberdeen Asset Management as an important client base until two directors, including Osborne, retired in 2015.

Rod Hayler re-branded HO2 retaining those clients who fitted his scaled down personal service offering. The firm now acts for fewer high net worth individuals and property companies, with commercial property investments located throughout the UK.

Moving the business to Brighton from the registered office in Hemel Hempstead was not the only change afoot. As well as the premises and the reduced client base Rod wanted to correspondingly scale down the property management software from the all singing and all dancing, but expensive, system warranted by the previous client base. What should he choose?

> *We needed a replacement for the fifty plus properties with over 100 tenants, ideally a cost-effective networked property management system, capable of providing landlord, tenant, property and tenancy details.*

The system needed the capability of raising rent demands, service charges and providing a client accounting system for the individual landlords. Managing the properties would include service charge management and reconciliation with comparison against budget for each of the properties.

There would be no more than five users, including Rod, the main operators would be Nick Manby, HO2's accounts supremo together with an Accounts Manager. Two further surveyors needed to access the system and so the Windows based system and easily recognisable standard icons of KEYPrime software was a bonus for looking up information. Any detailed inputting and reports would be supplied by the accounts team. Nick Manby would be able to cope with anything drawing on his knowledge from the larger property finance IT world.

A website search for 'property management software' in May 2015 threw up Landmark and a few others, "one company said that a demonstration was not possible," recalled Rod Hayler! Landmark impressed enough to make the demonstration stage and the HO2 finance team arrived at Pulborough. The solution from Landmark consisted of KEYPrime Property linked directly to KEYPrime Advanced accounts augmented by the Client Accounting module – the latter to manage those multiple individual landlords within the overall HO2 client account.

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The order was placed in July, with a deadline of 'going live' in September to give the whole of August for installation, familiarisation and training. For simplicity the system would run on a hosted server to avoid the administrative burden of maintaining an on-site server. The data was migrated in the space of a week from the previous HO2 central office, with the help of the technical support team at Landmark. The Finance Manager in Hertfordshire extracted the core information out of the central system into a Landmark template spreadsheet, from which the set up was done, and then training took place in Brighton. The demo data ran alongside the live data in Hertfordshire for a couple of weeks until the Brighton team were ready for a second day of training and to push the 'live' button in the first week of August.

How was the implementation? "Smooth," said Rod: "We learned during the set up period; it was straight forward and achieved in a week. It was a very important exercise for me to be involved. During that first summer we had as much training as we needed from Landmark's friendly training team as we addressed different stages in the rent demand and management cycles. We were able to ask questions as they cropped up, set up layouts and compare reports with our previous system to make sure that we understood how KEYPrime Property worked and that it could do what we wanted.

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"You get used to reports and there is a detailed client statement report showing creditors, debtors and cashflow for landlords which we are working to achieve with the Landmark development team. KEYPrime can do it but we want it in a format that we are used to and need to do some work to get data in the right places. We have a good working relationship with Landmark, so I am confident that we will get it right".

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