

Case Study

Agrovista
Agronomy services
Business Change and Transformation

Ricoh trusted advisor approach delivers business change and transformation for leading UK agronomy firm



As soon as Agrovista - a leading UK agronomy business - engaged with Ricoh it felt like a new and different partnership. Since then, Ricoh's innovative approach to business and IT consultancy has seen Agrovista transform

its business processes and working practice. It has helped the organisation become more process led without losing its people focus, establish a modern IT infrastructure and deliver digital services to staff and customers.

Executive summary

Name: Agrovista UK Limited
Location: Nottingham, UK Midlands
Size: 310 staff
Activity: Agronomy services

Challenges

- Growth and expansion driving need for business change
- Lack of resources and experience to enable systems and organisational improvement
- Under investment in IT hindering change

Solution

- Ricoh Business Change and Transformation consultancy
- Underpinned by Ricoh services and solutions:
 - Workplace Services
 - IT Infrastructure Services
 - Communication and Application Services
 - Managed Print and Document Services
- Five-year IT managed service

Benefits

- Transforms business processes, practices and environment
- Establishes an IT platform to support modern, flexible, agile business systems
- Delivers efficient, cost-effective, less wasteful office services
- Enables modern, integrated, cloud applications and services
- HQ perception changed from 'unloved' to valued resource

Challenges

Agrovista is a leading supplier of agronomy advice, seed, crop protection products and precision farming services. It has the most comprehensive integrated arable trials programme in the UK. From 20 depots and regional centres, Agrovista staff act as local crop care experts, committed to helping UK farms, food growers and landowners operate sustainably, effectively and profitably.

Over the last few years, Agrovista has experienced considerable growth and change. Internally, increasing revenues, business expansion and more staff are driving significant organisational and operational change. Externally, customers expect more digital capabilities and interaction. This, along with an imminent office move, prompted senior management to evaluate how the business needed to change.

Duncan Brown, Finance Director at Agrovista, says, "Research suggests that when a business reaches around £170m turnover it needs to make a real shift from being people to process-driven. And that is exactly where Agrovista is. There was too much reliance on the right people doing the right thing, which is fine provided anybody else joining the organisation understands that, but that is not always the case."

Agrovista realised that one of the enablers to change is technology. But IT investment had fallen behind business growth. IT systems and infrastructure were getting old and out-dated and could not support a shift to a digital, process-led organisation. IT reflected Agrovista separated, small-office working environment where communication was limited.

Ashley Tomsett, Agrovista's IT Director, says, "We started to look at how we could modernise our IT and make it work better for a mobile workforce and distributed business network. Like many businesses it was an increase in mobile technology and enabling our staff to have access to the information they need wherever they are. From a corporate point of view, it was having more integrated systems, better continuity and being more joined up with customers."

Although Agrovista had an experienced IT team, it was small and Duncan Brown and Ashley Tomsett knew they would need

to find a partner to support the business. Agrovista looked at several IT service providers, but was impressed by Ricoh because it seemed to offer something different.

Tomsett says, "I get a lot of phone calls from suppliers who meet me and immediately want to sell me something. Ricoh, on the other hand, didn't push us, it was willing to listen and come up with ideas. Ricoh could see we had to go through a process ourselves to understand and learn what was needed. It was prepared to go on that journey with us, and when it did work with us, it demonstrated it could deliver the quality we were looking for."

Brown adds, "The other thing we liked about Ricoh was consultancy and advice based on Ricoh's own experience. Ricoh has undergone its own change process and is now bringing that experience to other businesses. Despite Ricoh being considerably larger than Agrovista, the solutions being proposed were scaled, practical and very helpful."

Solution

Agrovista partnered with Ricoh, to deliver consultancy and services around business change and transformation. Under the umbrella of Ricoh's Workplace Services, Agrovista has utilised Ricoh change management consultancy and training as well as several Ricoh solutions including IT Infrastructure Services, Communication and Application Services, and Managed Document Services.

When Agrovista moved to new headquarters in Nottingham, Ricoh carried out several process and resource audits to determine current status, how people and the organisation operated and how this could be improved. Through its Workplace Services offering, Ricoh advised Agrovista on designing and setting up an ergonomic and collaborative work environment that maximised space and services.

A key element of the service was consultancy and training on organisational change. Ricoh advised and trained Agrovista's change management team in Six Sigma and Lean Process skills. This was delivered via a series of workshops and training programmes and helped Agrovista put in place new systems and processes to change and improve the way staff work.

One element of changing work practice was implementing a Ricoh Print and Managed Document Service. This involved replacing multiple desktop printers with Ricoh Multifunction Products (MFPs). Instead of individual desktop devices, printing and document handling was re-directed to centralised hubs where staff use Ricoh MFPs for document printing, scanning and copying. As well as reducing device numbers from over 20 to 3, the Ricoh service enables centralised management, more efficient and less wasteful document handling, facilities such as Follow Me printing and a reduction in carbon footprint. Ricoh Interactive White Boards have also been installed to support better communication and collaborative working.

The other aspect of the Ricoh solution was IT infrastructure and desktop modernisation. This involved deploying new collaborative and cloud-based technologies such as Microsoft Office 365. Ricoh provided significant planning and design consultancy which enabled Agrovista to deploy the infrastructure in the most effective way. In addition, Ricoh provided Windows 10 design and build consultancy, an Office 365 migration pilot, development of a new server infrastructure, and disaster recovery and back-up services.

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With the move towards a Microsoft Windows 10 platform, Ricoh is working with Agrovista to enhance the solution. Ricoh is launching a five-year managed service comprising support and consultancy around a new hybrid IT infrastructure with a mix of on-site and private cloud servers. It involves a core server architecture redesign; on-going, remote server management; and cloud back-up and disaster recovery delivered through a Ricoh managed service. This will further improve and modernise Agrovista's IT environment with scalability to support growth, as well as providing more reliability, business continuity and reduced risk.

Benefits

Brown says, "The move to the new office was a physical change, but significantly it was a change in working practice and business structure. The impact of Ricoh's expertise and experience was enabling us to make that jump painless and smooth. It meant we could move from the old, small-office, limited-communication environment to an open-plan office that is far more conducive to collaborative working. We didn't feel it was being done to us, nor were we left on our own because throughout the journey Ricoh was there to provide help and guidance."

Tomsett adds, "Some of the work that we have done in partnership with Ricoh around change management has completely changed the environment at head office in terms of collaboration between team members and giving people confidence and authority to do things themselves. And it has changed the perception of head office from being a bit unloved to adding value to the whole organisation."

The new IT infrastructure solution gives Agrovista a more reliable IT infrastructure for users and the business and supports more secure, flexible and agile solutions. It means that IT works effectively and efficiently when and where it is needed and provides a modern tool set to meet business demand for digital systems and applications.

Brown says, "We recognise the importance of having a stable and secure IT infrastructure and better process management. Success for us is that the rest of the organisation doesn't even know it's happened because it has just felt very natural. We would never have done this with our own internal resources, so having a strong and effective partner like Ricoh is of enormous value to the business."

Effective Partnership

"One of the things that we appreciated most is Ricoh's acceptance and adaptation to our pace of change. It has never felt like a hard sell, but the tension has always been there to keep progressing. That is supporting and working with us and is why the relationship has been so strong. Lesser organisations might have been tempted by the first sale, whereas Ricoh saw we were on a journey and was prepared to travel with us."

Duncan Brown, Finance Director at Agrovista

"What demonstrates and tests a positive relationship is when things go wrong. When they have, the strength of the relationship with Ricoh meant I could be very honest, raise the issue and then have Ricoh deal with it. To me that responsiveness has been positive in terms of honesty and understanding because Ricoh got to know and understand what we needed."

Ashley Tomsett, Agrovista's IT Director

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh Professional services: business and IT consultancy, training
- Microsoft environment:
 - Windows 10
 - Windows Server 2016
 - Windows Azure
 - Hyper-V
- HP and NetApp hardware
- Ricoh Multifunction Products
- Ricoh print management software
- Ricoh Interactive White Boards

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