

Fast-Growing Motor Group Drives Efficiency through Major IT Overhaul

PM Group (formerly Preston Motors Group) is one of the oldest and most trusted collection of car dealerships in Victoria. And recently, they have also been one of the fastest-growing. As part of their growth strategy, they purchased several chains and dealerships - which required them to not only consolidate their brand, but their IT systems.

“We had serious issues to address,” says PM Group’s Information Technology Manager, Damian Lupton. “Lots of points of failure in our IT systems. That’s when we decided to invest in what was required to create an IT infrastructure that would serve us now and into the future.”



PM AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

The Search for a New IT Firm

When Damian began the search for an IT firm, he knew what products he wanted to run and had a general idea for the solution he hoped to implement. He had just put out an RFP to several firms he’d used in the past when Huon IT happened to call.

“At first I thought for sure I’d use one of the firms I already had a relationship with,” Damian says. “But Huon IT really impressed me. They listened to the story of our business and understood every point of failure in the system.”

By contrast, Damian says that other providers didn’t take the time to get to know PM Group like Huon IT did. “The other firms tried to sell us on solutions we didn’t need,” Damian says. “Huon IT listened. They saw the project from a holistic perspective and wanted to become a partner, not just a provider. That mindset set them apart from the rest.”

The Challenges

As PM Group had taken over several dealerships as part of their expansion strategy, each location had its own IT system. The result was a disparate IT infrastructure that was near impossible to update. In fact, no changes could be made across the board without hours of intensive manual labour updating every device and workstation - not practical with over 400 workstations!

In addition, users had various logins for their devices and desktops, with some users needing as many as eight credentials for their day-to-day tasks. The lack of centralised infrastructure meant no consolidated data storage, no unified back-ups, no streamlined security measures, and no central wireless access points.

The result was an outdated and inefficient IT environment with many points of failure that was impossible to manage and control.

“I’ve dealt with a lot of IT companies over the past 20 years, and I’ve never dealt with one as good as Huon IT. From understanding our needs to implementing a major transition across all systems, Huon IT has been nothing short of brilliant.”

– Damian Lupton,
Group IT Manager,
PM Automotive Group

Overview

- Seamless integration of disparate IT infrastructure across 400+ workstations
- Streamlined login took users from up to eight logins to a single sign-on
- Upgraded legacy mail platform to Exchange 2016
- Improved business continuity by alleviating patchy data recovery and back-up mechanisms
- 100% uptime in 12 months

The Solution

Windows 2012 R2 Hyper-V servers in a cluster configuration, so that if one fails, the other takes over, resulting in minimal disruption to users in case of outage. In addition, remedial issues and scheduled maintenance can be carried out without any system down time.

A new network core stack provisioned specifically to support the infrastructure, This ensured 100% availability in the event of hardware failure, accelerated network performance, reduced performance bottlenecks, and increased speed and ease of management.

Windows 2012 R2 Active Directory, which centralises user management and security. Now, the same login is used across the board - including emails, desktops, laptops, mobile devices, etc. They also installed a Network Policy Server, which created centralised authentication for non-Windows based devices.

Microsoft Exchange 2016, which allows for central management and integration of mobile devices and dramatically simplifies the process for configuring new devices. Huon IT also implemented Exclaimer to place a brand-consistent signature on every message sent to the public, regardless of location or device.

Robust recovery and back-up plan, with Veeam back-up and replication to both on-premise and off-premise data repositories.



“We improved efficiency 30%-40% just with the new systems,” says Damian. “And the overhead and management of the systems has decreased dramatically. The result is a serious WOW factor that users still comment on. Everyone is blown away.”

The Benefits

- Dramatically improved efficiency
- Centralised management of all systems, including email, login credentials, applications, and more
- Rock-solid recovery and back-up plan that provides peace of mind
- Simplified user management and login process
- User maintenance workload significantly reduced

“Here at PM Group, we’re going to continue to grow - and with the systems Huon IT has designed for us, we’re ready to grow,” Damian says. “If you’re considering working with Huon IT, don’t give it a second thought. Give them a call, talk to them about what you need. If you give them an hour, they’ll impress you.”