

CASE STUDY

IT SERVICES AND SAGE 200

► SHAWSTON
INTERNATIONAL

Microsoft Partner



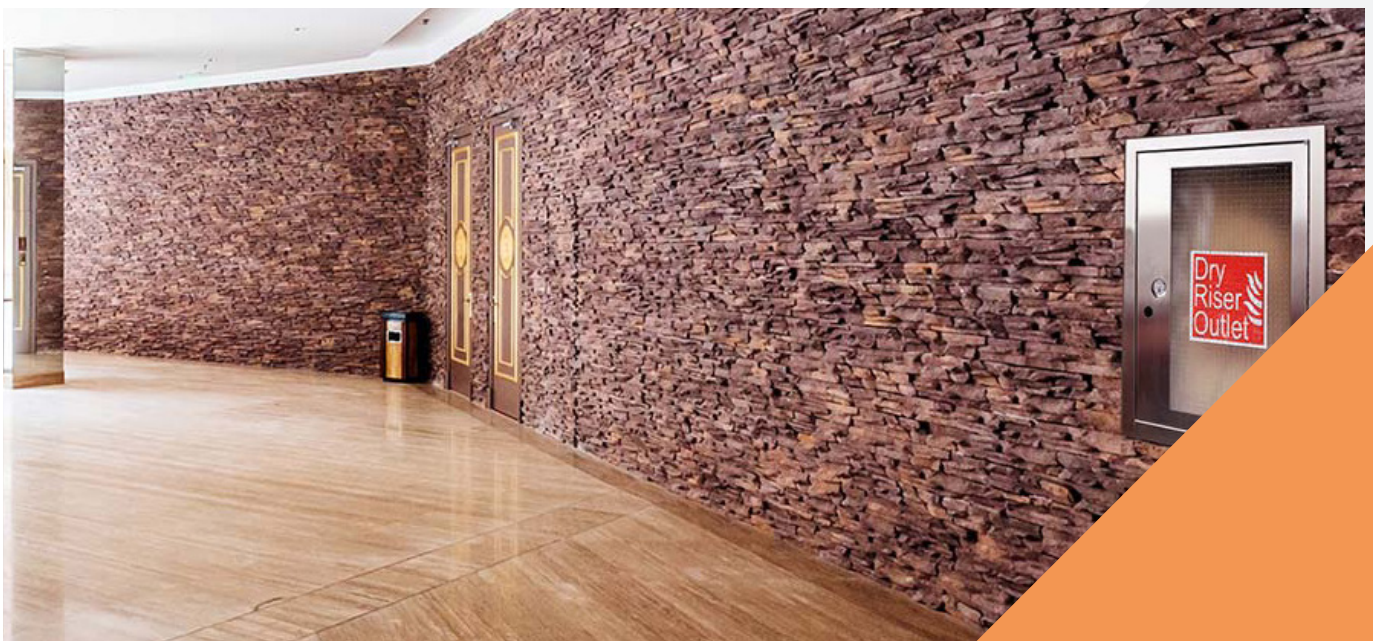
PEACE OF MIND NOT JUST A PIPEDREAM, AS PINNACLE SUPPORTS SHAWSTON INTERNATIONAL'S IT INFRASTRUCTURE



CLIENT PROFILE

Shawston International Limited is one of the UK's largest privately owned distributors of steel tubes, fittings, valves and pipe supports for mechanical engineering applications and fire protection systems, with close to 50 years' experience. Its products are used in the construction of hotels, schools, homes and public works across the country. Crossrail is just one major project to which it supplies.

The business has come a long way in a few years. Back in 2001, it comprised a single site and had an annual turnover of £400,000 and 10 staff. Today, under new management, it employs 120 people in 6 locations across the UK, and is on target to post sales of £19 million this year. The Shawston team processes 50,000 orders every year. It's an astounding fact that Shawston's fleet of 25 vehicles makes a delivery to a customer site every 90 seconds of the working day.





A CRITICAL NEED FOR JOINED-UP SUPPORT

Consistently keeping its 'next-day' promise is a fundamental element in Shawston's success. To achieve this high level of responsive service requires business information to flow smoothly through the company's processes, from quotation to delivery to invoicing, over a reliable and seamless IT infrastructure.

From the company's headquarters in Hyde, Cheshire, Shawston's Managing Director Mark Dyer explains, **"With continued expansion, we required a provider with the size, scale and expertise to support the extensive IT infrastructure on which the smooth-running of our business depends. Our customers work to tight timescales: an order placed at 16.00 might be needed on site in London by 9.00 the next morning."**

This was the driver for upscaling the level of support on the company's IT infrastructure. Sage Business Partner had been providing support on Shawston's Sage 200 system since 2011, but until a couple of years ago an alternative IT maintenance consultancy had been looking after the hardware side.

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MARK DYER

MANAGING DIRECTOR, SHAWSTON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED





A MAJOR BUSINESS DECISION

Mark recalls the lightbulb moment when Pinnacle introduced its IT Support Division: **“Given the complexity of today’s IT estates, there were clear advantages to bringing support for all aspects of our IT infrastructure, not just Sage 200, but our servers, networks, third-party software... under one roof, with a single point of accountability. We were looking for help not just to keep our IT ticking over but to develop an infrastructure that would add value to our business.”**

With Pinnacle having a local presence across the UK and Ireland, its organisation aligned with Shawston’s own expanding network of distribution centres and sales offices. However, the move to Pinnacle for support was not a step undertaken lightly, as Mark notes, **“It was a big decision. If it had gone wrong, there would have been massive repercussions for the business. Fortunately, I was able to speak with another Pinnacle support customer, and their positive experience of Pinnacle’s expertise in performing an installation was very reassuring. For my part, I’m now happy to recommend Pinnacle to others considering taking this step.”**

Since the move, Pinnacle has centralised Shawston’s IT network to the Hyde head office and carried out server upgrades to eliminate performance issues and bottlenecks. For example, the sales office in High Wycombe used to have chronic problems with performance. Pinnacle implemented virtualisation technology with site-to-site replication and failover capability, which brought an instant boost to performance.

DISASTER AVERTED

Mark’s growing confidence in Pinnacle has proved well-founded. Today, the smooth flow of business data means that staff can quickly access key information, which accelerates business processes, notably across the sales cycle.

Mark highlights one potentially catastrophic incident that demonstrates Pinnacle’s ability to stop an issue turning into a crisis: **“When a failure in a junction box affected the network, Pinnacle was able to recover our data on the duplicate server it had installed in our High Wycombe office. Without this built-in safeguard, we would have lost a week’s sales; that’s equivalent to £300,000.”**

He points out, **“It’s not only the financial damage that such a loss of service would cause, there’s the reputational hit, too. Our customers rely on us implicitly for nextday service and if we can’t live up to their expectations, we’re soon out of the picture. We’re only as good as the last time we solved a problem for them, and there’s no margin for error.”**



A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR SUPPORT

Shawston is about to bring its Sage CRM (customer relationship management) system under Pinnacle's wing, but importantly, support goes beyond the Sage portfolio to cover products ranging from third-party document management and credit control software by Draycir to antivirus software by Sophos.

Mark cites Microsoft Office as a good example of Pinnacle's added value: **"Pinnacle brought us into the 21st century by migrating day-to-day Office tools over to the Office 365 cloud service. Automatic updates in the cloud keep all our users 'on the same page', so no time is wasted on software updates or compatibility issues within the sales cycle."**

New users can simply be added in the cloud, so Shawston has no need to buy a new software package every time a new member of staff comes on board.

The Pinnacle team are also a source of desktop support for everyday user problems and can supply new hardware, such as laptops, when required.

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ROLLING OUT SHAWSTON'S GROWTH STRATEGY

Shawston is ambitious to become £25 million business over the next few years. Mark comments, **"IT is not our forte and we don't pretend to be computer boffins. We just want it all to work without having to think about it and we rely on Pinnacle to get it right and help to make our processes slicker. It leaves us free to concentrate on running an efficient, customer-focused business. They do a brilliant job and it's a great contrast to the lengthy downtimes we used to experience, when the remote connection at our High Wycombe offices failed on an almost daily basis."**

While his Pinnacle account manager keeps in touch, Mark rarely needs to speak to the support team: **"To be honest, that's how we like it. It shows our IT is all working smoothly and, with Pinnacle's continued support, is providing a solid foundation for our sustained success."**

He sums up, **"It's all about having peace of mind that the IT on which we rely implicitly is working away quietly in the background."**



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MARK DYER

MANAGING DIRECTOR, SHAWSTON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED



ESTABLISHED 1993