



A Forward-Looking Expansion

Designing an Infrastructure for Growth and Scale at The Paper Store

Building on Success

When The Paper Store needed to upgrade their infrastructure in order to enable their expansion, they contacted the experts at Connection to help them design a solution. The Paper Store's central goal was growth. In their first 50 years in business, they had expanded from one location to 50. Now they were planning to grow from 50 to 100 stores over the next five years.

To do that, they realized they would need a major upgrade in the way they managed their IT operations. As a rapidly growing business, they needed a solution that was scalable. Faced with a sizeable project that would affect their entire business, they turned to the experts at Connection.

Learn how centralizing IT management with Connection and their partners helped get The Paper Store up to speed.

An Upgrade for More than Hardware

The existing landscape at The Paper Store was fairly typical for a retail environment. Each store made use of three or four traditional PCs, and they had an internal data room for the back office. This management strategy made it difficult for their relatively small IT team to add and manage new devices. "Managing 40–50 stores at a time, each with three or four computers was just becoming very difficult for our IT team," said Craig Murphy, IT Manager for The Paper Store. Plus, PCs and servers were aging and outdated in many stores. However, upgrading the machines would leave them with the same management struggles—only alleviating part of the problem.

They needed a solution that provided central control of the working environment in each of their retail outlets. Not only that, but they also wanted a solution that would help free up their internal resources so they wouldn't have to

spend as much time on the day-to-day IT operations. That would free the team up to focus on more strategic activities as the business grew and opened new locations. "We thought that maybe we'd engage another service provider to take care of all our work for us, and pay them monthly to maintain these PCs, so we can focus on our business," explained Murphy. But the team at Connection had an even better idea.

A Truly Scalable Solution

The experts at Connection presented an infrastructure plan. They worked with The Paper Store team to design a solution that would turn over the daily IT tasks to a service provider. The Connection and Paper Store teams took inventory of the number of PCs per location, how many users need to access them, and the current licensing model for their software. Once they knew what they needed to accomplish, the Connection team helped The Paper Store pick the technologies that would be the best fit for their operations.

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"With our knowledge of the industry and technical expertise, we were able to help The Paper Store stitch all the various pieces of the solution together. That effort would have been very difficult as well as time consuming had they tried to go it alone."

—Justin Baron, Solutions Architect,
Connection



In the end, the infrastructure as a service solution would involve a strategic cloud partner who would provide the majority of the server space—instead of The Paper Store installing more of its own at headquarters. "We decided to recommend a solution where we were going to be proactively monitoring their network infrastructure as well as all the devices at each of their locations," said Justin Baron, Solutions Architect at Connection. Each store was outfitted with a router and switch that would be monitored 24 x 7, so that any issues with the store could be diagnosed and repaired by the central IT staff with minimal downtime.

The Paper Store's original infrastructure utilized custom servers that were running specific applications, and Connection was able to move the applications into a hosted environment, reducing the need for The Paper Store to own and manage their own servers. As they continued down the upgrading and streamlining path, the teams found that by putting more and more of those managed services together into one single service provider, it created massive efficiencies for The Paper Store. They would no longer have to work with multiple partners to manage their technology, making operations more efficient and more easily scalable.

Moving Beyond the Day to Day

The Paper Store was able to greatly reduce their risk of downtime since the bulk of their IT services are now being delivered from a well-designed facility with up-to-date, enterprise-grade infrastructure. When there is an issue, they can contact one partner—instead of making multiple phone calls and waiting several days for a problem to be addressed. In addition, when it's time to open up new stores, all it takes is a call to Connection to start the rollout. With day-to-day issues such as administration, managing backups, and applying patches covered, The Paper Store team can now focus on their true goal—expansion.

"We worked very closely with that team to make sure that what we put in place would not only meet their needs, but also would integrate into the overall IT processes that they were going to adopt afterwards," said Kevin O'Connor, Senior Director of Cloud Solutions Group at Connection.

If your business wants to focus less on the mundane operations of IT and more on strategic IT goals, turn to the experts at Connection. We'll work with you to design a solution that fits your unique needs.

"We now have time to innovate. We have time to bring the business towards those hundred stores, towards other areas. We can focus more on how to open and run our stores more efficiently, how to improve the experience for the folks in the stores or the folks in the office or the warehouse—any number of different projects that would better the business, versus reacting to broken technology."

—Craig Murphy, IT Manager,
The Paper Store



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