



Case Study

Boston Harbor Cruises

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Alison Nolan, General Manager, Boston Harbor Cruises

THE CHALLENGE

For more than eight decades, Boston Harbor Cruises has been the premier ticket to ride on Boston Harbor. The company owns and operates 20 vessels for year-round commuter transportation routes, whale watching, sightseeing tours and private charters as well as traditional and high-speed ferry transportation. Boston Harbor Cruises' history of operating passenger vessels in Boston Harbor as well as New York Harbor, Narragansett Bay and the Caribbean has earned the company an “Industry Best” distinction.

In 2006, as the company realized its computer network infrastructure was in need of an upgrade to improve performance and reliability, Boston Harbor Cruises considered a fundamental change in the way computer operations would be supported and maintained.

“We were using a full-time, internal IT resource,” said Alison Nolan, General Manager for Boston Harbor Cruises. “But as the company grew and technology became more complex, we felt we could improve the quality of support by working with an outside solution provider. Having an internal resource was convenient, but one person isn't enough to meet the needs of a company like ours in terms of the diverse technology knowledge that is required and the bandwidth of availability that one person can offer.”

Boston Harbor Cruises operates year-round, but from April to October, the amount of business increases sharply with all of the tourists that come to Boston. “Our main busy times in-season are the weekends, so we particularly needed a solution provider that could provide immediate IT support on Saturdays and Sundays,” Nolan said. “If we don't have instant access to IT support for our ticketing and IP telephone systems, we would be unable to service customers properly.”

THE SOLUTION

As Nolan began the search for an IT solution provider partner, she heard about Covisia from a colleague when looking for help with a Citrix server issue. “As we began a formal search process, we also gave serious consideration to two other solution providers,” Nolan said. “But we decided to partner with Covisia because of that initial recommendation as well as how impressed we were by Covisia's overall proposal and its Managed Support Services program. Covisia detailed exactly how they could help us, and the team impressed us with its level of customer service and expertise across multiple technologies.”

Key Benefits of Covisia's Access Solution

- Zero downtime during peak tourist season due to improvements in network infrastructure, cabling, servers and wireless network
- Remote network support and monitoring identifies and helps prevent potential problems
- Users receive immediate and direct support via e-mail or phone, freeing management from having to coordinate support incidents.
- Flexible service program provides sufficient coverage during peak season while saving costs during low-demand season.
- Outsourcing IT support vs. hiring internal IT resources reduces support costs by approximately 25 percent.

As part of the Managed Support Services offering, Covisia initially helped Boston Harbor Cruises by performing a network assessment and then upgrading any dated equipment while applying needed software updates. "Many of our servers were out-of-date in terms of keeping-up with latest patches, particularly our Exchange server," Nolan said. "Covisia also deployed a reliable backup solution and provided updates to our anti-virus and firewall software."

In addition to general network upgrades, Covisia helped improve the performance of Boston Harbor Cruises' wireless scanning network. "This was an important improvement because we use scanners at our gates to validate tickets," Nolan said. "Our previous wireless network wasn't strong and secure enough to handle the amount of traffic we generated – particularly on the water's edge where a great amount of wireless traffic from other sources tends to occur."

As part of the on-going Managed Support Services program, Covisia monitors servers, network devices and end-user PCs from a remote monitoring operation center. "Our server hard drives never run out of space because Covisia manages them remotely and provides remote support to prevent downtime," Nolan said.

The remote monitoring capability also means that Boston Harbor Cruises rarely has to call to report problems because Covisia is able to take proactive steps before problems occur. But when necessary, the Managed Support Services package allows employees to call or e-mail for immediate response at which point Covisia can fix most problems remotely but will visit on-site when necessary. Covisia also performs periodic on-site visits for health checks and to review performance reports.

THE BENEFITS

Since the initial system improvements, Covisia has provided on-going remote and on-site support for six servers as well as approximately 50 desktops, PCs and other end-user devices such as ticket scanners. Covisia monitors the network remotely 24x7 during Boston Harbor Cruise's busy season (April to October) and 9x5 during the off-season. "A flexible plan like this reduces our support costs but also ensures we have the coverage we need, especially on weekends during our peak season when we do most of our business," Nolan said.

In 2008, following the deployment of the improved cabling infrastructure and wireless solution, Boston Harbor Cruises went through the entire peak season without any down time. "The most valuable service Covisia provides is a complete assessment of servers and the environment," Nolan said. "From there they recommend what actions to take and can deploy any necessary upgrades to hardware and software. This gives us the comfort and security that our network is now operating as best as it possibly can."

By working with Covisia, Boston Harbor Cruises also benefits from the knowledge of the entire team and Covisia's ability to find solutions no matter that the issue is. If one systems engineer can't find a solution, Covisia has other experts on staff to fall back-on. And if a third-party is needed for a particular niche technology, Covisia knows how to work with other providers to ensure problems are solved promptly. In assessing the ROI of having Covisia support the Boston Harbor Cruises IT operations, Nolan estimates the company saves approximately 25 percent over the cost of salaries and benefits for internal IT resources..

IN SUMMARY

"We were in a situation where our network needed a lot of help, Nolan concluded. "We now have a reliable network that is fundamental to our business, which is critical because we are in the customer service business. To service customers properly, we need reliable technology in place, and since Covisia began servicing our network, the performance and the security have significantly improved. Working with Covisia has been a worthwhile expenditure compared to relying on an internal, full-time IT support professional."

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ALISON NOLAN, GENERAL MANAGER

About Covisia Solutions

Covisia Solutions is a full-service IT solutions provider focused on helping organizations align their IT operations with their business to improve information access and security, reduce complexity and cost, and manage technology to meet the needs of competitiveness, growth and change. Whether your need is improved information access or greater security, a network upgrade or strategic planning, Covisia Solutions can help your IT organization deliver for business.