

Air Charter Service (ACS)

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*Rob Bishop, Group IT Manager
at Air Charter Services*

Founded in 1990, Air Charter Service Plc (ACS) is a global leader in the air brokerage industry. ACS operates in both private and freight markets and provides aircraft and related travel services for private hire, TV and film logistics, travel agents and group travel, whilst its cargo department provides aircraft for aid and relief agencies, government departments, freight forwarders, general sales agents and airlines.

ACS's commitment to exceptional personal service saw the company grow rapidly and it expanded from its headquarters in Kingston Upon Thames with the opening of a number of international regional offices, which now include New York, Moscow, Dubai, Hong Kong, Spain and Johannesburg.

Whether it is flying VIPs to remote locations or delivering important cargo, ACS prides its self on having a reputation for quality, punctuality and reliability. To achieve these goals, it recognises that the ability to react in an ever-changing business landscape is essential and a key part of maintaining the company's operational effectiveness is its IT infrastructure. It relies heavily on computerised reservation systems for passenger bookings and freight management, while customer records and

other business critical data is held locally on servers. To ensure its IT systems are in the best possible health, ACS outsources its IT support and maintenance to Surrey based IT consultancy ramsac.

Rob Bishop, Group IT Manager at ACS explains, "We operate in an incredibly aggressive marketplace, so it is vital that we maintain the highest levels of IT support for our business operations on a continual basis. ramsac works closely with ACS to ensure these levels are consistently met, providing a vital layer of support and a backup service should there be any potential interruption with the in-house IT support, such as illness, or during staff holiday periods."

As well as helping ACS make its data backup and disaster recovery systems process more robust, the company

also benefits from ramzac's wider in-depth IT expertise and knowledge. Being a dedicated IT specialist, ramzac has the capacity to keep abreast of the latest industry trends – offering these benefits to its clients. "One of the major advantages of working with ramzac is that we benefit from the latest in product developments and training without having to incur the additional and often prohibitive costs and time resources required to keep abreast of these," says Bishop.

ramzac has also extensively assisted ACS at a strategic level, as Paul Mew, ramzac's Technical Director, explains, "We have worked very closely with ACS on projects to enable virtualisation and better shared storage across the company's systems. Consolidating its number of servers has worked in tandem with the move to virtualisation to free up valuable resources and give a far greater degree of control over them. Using a Dell Equallogic storage area network (SAN), ACS can now easily scale storage without having to make extensive changes to the network infrastructure. The network is also more robust, with a failover backup service that protects the company's invaluable data and also ensures a high degree of flexibility and resilience, which allows a

server to be taken offline (for maintenance or replacement for example) without causing any disruptions."

ACS' adoption of a Dell Equallogic SAN is also a prime example of the company utilising ramzac's expert knowledge. As a certified Dell Partner, ramzac has access to the technology, training and best practices of Dell, encompassing both products and services. This means ramzac has been able to install and fully configure the system for ACS' needs, as Bishop continues, "Having had an in-depth consultation with ramzac we decided to move all of our essential business data to one storage system. In some ways this was considered a very bold move, as any significant failure could be disastrous. However, ramzac gave us the confidence and practical assurance that using the Dell Equallogic SAN would cater for our requirements and they have managed the whole operation, from the installation, integration and monitoring of the continued operation."

By adding a valuable resource to the IT function, ramzac has given ACS the freedom to develop its business and systems, safe in the knowledge that its infrastructure is not only keeping pace but often helping to drive parts of the company forward by offering

the highest levels of support to the core business. Mew elaborates, "A key part of working with clients such as ACS is to fully integrate into the business, its needs and its culture. As part of our role, we have taken care to fully understand how IT supports ACS' sales and marketing functions and developed a fully rounded view of the business and its needs, so we can give the best advice."

Bishop concludes, "ACS needs to be protected against a potential single point of failure in its IT technology, which can be a decisive issue if it is entirely dependent on an individual or few key people. Although outsourced, ramzac is in practise a direct extension of our IT department. On top of sharing the commitment to servicing our day-to-day needs, it keeps us up to date with the latest in IT developments and gives us honest, independent advice. The ramzac team have to be as up to speed on our systems and business as we are because there are occasions, such as holidays or illness, where they take the reigns and ensure our whole IT function runs smoothly."