

# St Leonards Motors Group (SLM)

## CASE STUDY

# SLM Group

### CLIENT PROFILE

SLM was the brainchild of father and son team Graham and Brian Wakeford with the purchase of a small garage on The Green, St Leonards-on-Sea in 1958. On 1st January 1959, St Leonards Motors opened for business and over the next 60+ years have grown in reputation. With acquisitions of other dealerships, today SLM Group remain a family owned business employing just under three hundred people and are a highly successful motor dealership, with 12 sites across East Anglia, Sussex and Kent including franchises with Toyota, Lexus, Nissan, Fiat and Vauxhall, two body shops and Sussex Used Cars.

### SERVICE

Data cabling refresh  
Hardware refresh  
Microsoft Azure infrastructure  
Astec SharePoint Online Zone  
Microsoft 365  
Power Apps  
PromisePlus IT Support

### RESULTS

Standardised and resilient environment  
Quick file access from any device/any where  
Secure environment  
Great end user experience  
Efficient and effective internal and external comms  
A headache free managed environment  
A strategic roadmap

### INDUSTRY

Motor dealership

**St Leonards Motors transforms its IT infrastructure, hardware and processes with a comprehensive company wide move to the cloud and adoption of Microsoft365 suite of applications.**

SLM are a successful motor dealership and as of 2022, the family group is comprised of 5 Toyota dealerships, 2 Vauxhall dealerships, 2 Nissan dealerships, 2 used cars sites SLM Select and Sussex Used Cars, plus two Body Repair Centres across East Sussex, Kent and East Anglia.

### THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Historically the group was supported by an internal IT team and the IT systems, both hardware and software, had grown organically and without structure. Cloud technology was not integrated into the environment, limiting flexibility and capability. The SLM board felt it was time to take a more progressive approach to technology. Operating across multiple offices, SLM needed a solution to allow their team to work collaboratively in a secure and safe environment. The ability to work from a range of devices was also important and something staff were unable to do with their old IT hardware and infrastructure. Reliability and consistency for users was a key requirement and there was a real need for centralised management and strategic development to support the future ambitions of the business.

*"From the very first meeting with Astec they seemed to have an innate understanding of our business and our IT needs. The Astec people were so reassuring, and it was quickly apparent that these guys were at the absolute top of their game."*

*Mark Phillips, SLM Managing Director*

## THE SOLUTION

Astec worked closely to understand SLMs specific challenges and future plans and then developed a robust IT strategy using technology roadmapping to create a reliable, efficient platform which would enable the group to take full advantage of the benefits of a Microsoft cloud environment.

Microsoft365 was key to this approach and as a Microsoft Gold Partner with competencies in Cloud Solutions, Astec were able to work with SLM to unlock the value in the Microsoft365 suite.

Cloud technology was at the core of this digital transformation project although the existing servers were replaced with current generation hardware for on-premise management of Active Directory, but importantly, integrated with a Microsoft Azure cloud Active Directory environment, creating a hybrid cloud environment and joining all SLM sites into one centrally managed structure. SLM's print management solution was moved into a Microsoft Azure hosted environment, for centralised management and control across the whole group.

SLM's data cabling infrastructure and wireless networking was reviewed and cabling across all sites brought up to standard, fully certified and documented. The wireless networks at all sites were replaced with a group wide, centrally managed Wi-Fi solution, providing a robust, reliable, secure and fast internal comms infrastructure.

All desktop and laptop hardware across the group was replaced with fast, modern technology, removing performance bottlenecks previously experienced by end users and providing reliable and warranted devices to ensure maximum uptime and interruption free working.

Astec moved SLM away from their existing legacy mail solution into Microsoft 365 to provide not only hosted email but a consistent, up to date desktop and cloud application suite.

Next was the addition of a bespoke intranet solution – SLM's SharePoint Zone, which Astec developed as SLM's central platform for business operations. Everything runs from here, shared internal document access, access to external cloud applications and it is all centrally securely managed based on an employee's job role, giving them access to everything they need for their job. This allowed fully collaborative working across every dealership.

Astec also deployed Microsoft Enterprise Mobility and Security (EM+S) software to provide a range of security solutions to protect critical customer data and help protect devices and user environments from malicious attack and data leakage.

Astec built a custom Annual Leave Management solution right into the Microsoft environment allowing for simple and easy leave management across the whole of the group and a transparent and frustration free process for the team.

With the new system deployed, Astec now deliver their PromisePlus IT support and managed services agreement which provides all users with a best in class central, friendly point of contact for all technology issues and saving the group £70,000 + per annum in internal staff costs. All technology is now centrally managed and pro-actively maintained on behalf of SLM and Astec continue to work with the board in developing and implementing a technology roadmap to support the ambitions of the group.

**"The decision to reform our IT was a big one, but it was the right decision, and getting Astec on board was the right decision also. They share our goals, they share our ambitions, and with Astec as part of the team we are thinking positively about SLM Group's future."**

***Mark Phillips, SLM Managing Director***



## THE OUTCOME

Significant performance improvements across the whole business were immediately noticed and previous system reliability issues disappeared.

SLM's staff now access their shared data online from within their Astec designed 'Zone' where their data is safely secured on Microsoft servers in the Cloud and is accessible from anywhere with Internet connectivity. A customised navigation structure makes getting to relevant information easy and logical. Staff can easily share and co-author live documents and collaborate effectively across the organisation regardless of their location.

Staff now feel that the technology is there to aid them in their role rather than being a hindrance to them. Combined with rapid and friendly support provided when issues or queries arise, a hugely positive impact on morale has been seen.

Efficiency and productivity has improved as systems work as expected, every time and the workflow processes implemented reduce manual effort and wasted time.

Data security is greatly improved and as a result Astec were able to deliver CyberEssentials accreditation for SLM Group following completion of the project.

There is a confidence in the environment and peace of mind for the board that SLM now has a partner that has taken away the technology headaches and is helping to drive the future strategy.

But this is still only the beginning of the journey as Astec work with SLM to further leverage the investments made to date.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

With this modern, agile and cloud led solution and the managed support environment to keep everything in good shape, Astec are continuing to work with SLM to deliver enhanced productivity solutions built using the Microsoft PowerApps and SharePoint platform.

This development will continue across all areas of the business, delivering an increasing series of productivity gains for SLM and help the teams and the board in fully exploiting the tools available to enable them to work even more productively and efficiently.

Astec are now implementing a communications rationalisation and upgrade programme to replace multiple communications technologies with fast, reliable and centrally managed leased line solutions, saving money and improving performance and reliability.

A review of the mixed telecoms solutions is underway with the aim of implementing a Microsoft Teams calling solution across all group sites for a seamless, integrated and flexible communications solution.



 [www.astec.website](http://www.astec.website) |  01424 460721

Building Modern Business

