

RIOTS IN TOTTENHAM, DISASTER RECOVERY AND SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Well established Tottenham based 2XL has been supplying recruitment services for nearly 15 years to a variety of local councils and organisations in London. They also provide important training services for temporaries and external organisations in health, social care, IT and accounting. 2XL runs Intersoftware's enterpriSe all-in-one solution

On the evening of the 7th August 2011 their successful business was burned to the ground in local riots. We spoke to them about that fateful day and how they managed to overcome what were seemingly overwhelming odds to get the business operational within a couple of days



Sequence of events

As the directors of 2XL sat in their homes they were initially watching peaceful demonstrations being televised. Operations Director, Angela Hall was working from home running the 24 hour service. Nobody was too concerned. Angela started to worry when got a call from a relative who was struggling to get home. She had been stopped by police coming out of a building where she had been teaching

Things looked as if they were beginning to get out of hand as the 2XL directors tried but couldn't get into the area where the office was. The building was equipped with fire and intruder alarms and it was just after the BBC TV van was turned over and live TV coverage was lost that they learned that the intruder alarm at the 2XL office had gone off. As they were getting commentary from security firm ADT the fire alarm went off too.

CASE STUDY



Angela Hall, Director of Operations said.

“It was weird. Although we were unable to get to the building there were some friends and relatives who had managed to get into the vicinity. We could hear them on their phones asking the mob not to burn the building - but sadly to no avail. Not long after that, a 2xl director who lives nearby was able to get close to the office, called to confirm that the building was totally burned to the ground.

At 6 am on Sunday morning we were eventually allowed through to where the office had been. It was like a war zone. As I stood in front of the building watching it smoulder my work mobile phone went off. It was one of our temps calling about work. And right there by the smouldering building I realised that business had to continue - and that's where we started again.

The day after tomorrow

2XL did have a good disaster recovery plan in place which physically consisted of moving all front office operations to one director's home and the back office to another's. Early on Sunday morning all the staff met at the burnt out building - and left for a meeting to start activating the plan.

Angela commented

“We knew we needed to act quickly - not least because we run a weekly pay role for over 150 temps and the deadline for the BACS payroll was 4pm on Wednesday. We had work to do and so did our suppliers. We got in touch with Intersoftware customer support and I have to say - their response was fantastic.”

The team set themselves some aggressive time frames. A server already set up at one of the houses enabled all the back ups and SQL database to be restored, staff brought in their personal lap tops, extra kit was borrowed or bought and after a short while everybody was able to connect remotely to the back office function.

Meantime communication was a big challenge. Two phone lines were needed to be kept clear for incoming calls but Angela also needed to make a lot of outbound calls - not least to instil confidence in temps and customers alike. That's where Skype came in handy.

She continued

“One thing we needed to do was communicate via email and text messages as we had no way of printing out payslips. Also we needed to track down any timesheet information that people may have just posted through our office door - and of course been burnt in the fire.

Very handily Intersoftware was able to very quickly install their Cont@ct software. This gave us the capability to send payslips and personalised Emails and SMS text messages to multiple addresses and mobile phone numbers entered in the system in just seconds.”

In fact, after a lot of pulling together, we ran a successful payroll that week - meeting our Wednesday deadline and managing to keep all our temp staff happy despite the situation.”

CASE STUDY



In looking back at the implementation of their disaster recovery plan Angela said that although it was a total success they have learnt quite a few lessons too.

Angela added

“It really helped that we are technology and not paper based - we would not have survived without the use of technology. For example all information on candidates and temps is scanned in and stored in the system - so even if we lost all the paper records - which we did - we still had them electronically.

Because we were forced to implement technology changes much faster than we might have done in normal circumstances we discovered that these worked really well. So in future we will work smarter - faster!

There were also some areas of partial concern that we will need to look at in future - for example should we have had higher broadband speeds already available. The whole question of how much money you put aside for disaster recovery is a balancing act between costs and managing resources. What we need now is a disaster recovery plan for our disaster recovery plan!!”

After 11 weeks of working remotely from the houses, 2XL successfully moved to new premises in the Tottenham Town Hall.

2XL would like to extend their thanks to everybody who helped out - suppliers, clients, local authorities, locals, relations, temps, staff and others.

ENDS

Notes:

2XL Recruitment was established in April 1997. In October 1997 2XL Training was established with the aim of providing quality training for temporaries and external organisations in health, social care, IT and accounting. 2XL's mission is to excel in the quality of service provided to clients, employees, trainees, and other service users.

2XL Recruitment has since worked with the neighbouring boroughs of Haringey, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Barnet, Enfield, Camden, Islington, and Waltham Forest in providing care and administrative services and is boosted by a management team with over 20 years combined experience and knowledge of the administrative and care environment and of the recruitment business in general.