

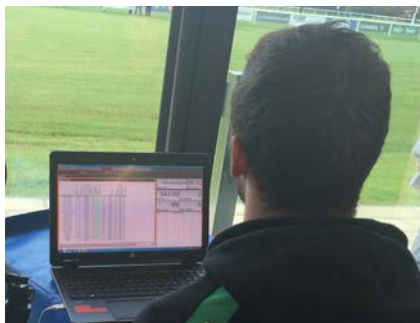
Innovative IT supports the ambitions of London Irish Rugby Club

State-of-the art IT infrastructure underpins the new head-quarters, training ground and Centre of Sporting Excellence at Hazelwood, Sunbury.

We've worked on many exciting projects over the years, but this one in particular is close to the beating heart of our MD – Shaun McKay, who is a rugby fanatic and youth coach. LeadingEdge was only too delighted when early in 2014, we were awarded the contract to implement the strategy and designs we had put forward for an IT infrastructure that would contribute to the purpose-built facilities at London Irish Rugby Club's new headquarters and training ground in Hazelwood, Sunbury.

The customer

London Irish Rugby Club was first formed in 1898, founded by a group of Irishmen to offer their countrymen a home away from home in London; it became a professional rugby club in 1996. Over the years the club was to outgrow its former spiritual home at The Avenue, Sunbury, and while home matches are well catered for at the Madejski Stadium, it sought a new headquarters and training centre that better aligned with the Club's ambitions both on and off the pitch.



On 20th June 2012, London Irish Rugby Club had their application approved to re-develop Hazelwood Golf Course into a state of the art rugby facility to house both the amateur and professional clubs of London Irish and to serve the local Spelthorne Community. Work began in May 2013 and London Irish moved

into their brand new £12 million training complex in July 2014 to begin the new era of London Irish Rugby Club.

The new 63-acre site is four times the size of The Avenue training ground and features 17 pitches, five full-size pitches and one artificial surface. The main pitch is used for training by the professional squad and for games by the development team and the 'Wild Geese', the top team in the Amateur Club. On Sunday mornings during the season, Hazelwood resounds to the noise of up to 400 junior & mini-rugby players and coaches that take over the grounds for training and matches. The custom-built clubhouse includes the elite equipment, physio and catering operations required for a professional rugby team in addition to conference and function rooms designed for use by the wider community.



The new purpose-built facilities for the London Irish Rugby Club at Hazelwood, Surrey.

“ We are delighted that our ambitious plans have come to fruition and believe that our new home provides a lasting legacy for our Club and all of those who will be using the facilities.”

*London Irish President,
Mick Crossan*



The elite rugby performance relies heavily on technology for monitoring and improvement.

The challenge

From the start, the visionaries behind the Hazelwood project recognised that architecting a state-of-the-art building was only part of the story. The elite rugby performance relies heavily on technology for performance monitoring and improvement, while the offices need technology to enable productivity, efficiency and collaboration for the massive job of co-ordinating professional and amateur players, coaches and supporters.

Richard Watton, Operations Manager at London Irish explains:

"We needed an IT provider that really understood our needs, our culture and our ambitions. Not only that, Hazelwood was a fast-paced and complex project – we were looking for a partner that would be agile enough to meet the inevitable changes to specification and timing and Leading Edge have provided that."

The solution

The new infrastructure involved both underlying cabling and Wi-Fi together with moving the 60 or so staff running the club from primarily desk-bound machines and systems to a cloud-based environment using key Microsoft tools.

Infrastructure elements:

- CAT5 and CAT6 cabling
- Wi-Fi throughout the building
- On-pitch Wi-Fi

Hybrid Cloud configuration:

- Windows Server with hyper-v virtualisation on premise
- Apple Server and devices for video-editing by coaches
- Office 365 (Exchange, SharePoint, Lync)

“The cloud-based platforms we’ve gone for have been liberating; staff can now easily work between the training facility in Hazelwood, Surrey, or at the club’s ground in Reading’s Madejski Stadium, and access key information whenever required.”

*London Irish Operations Manager,
Richard Watton*



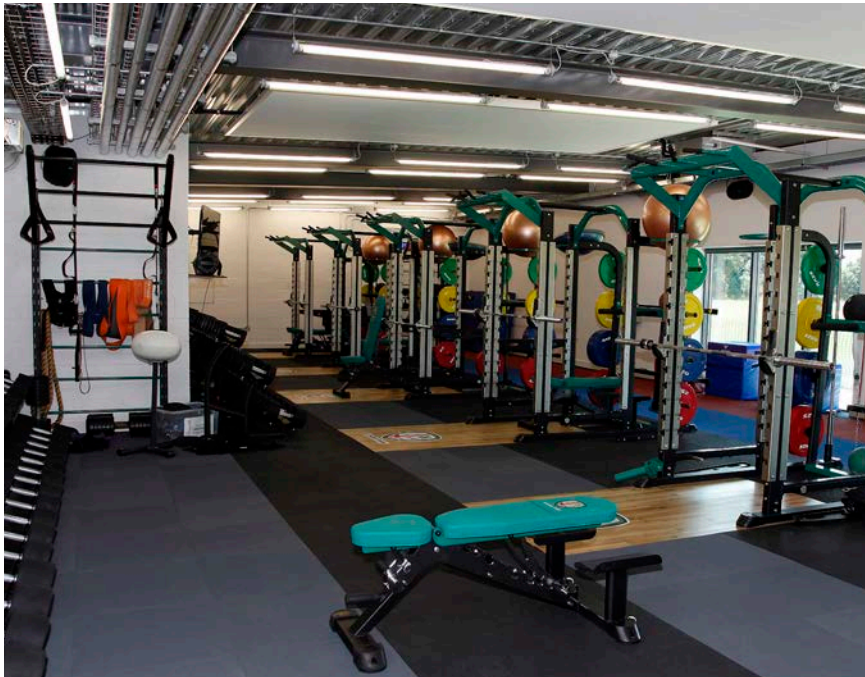
London Irish Operations Manager Richard Watton busy filming for a promotional video.

The outcome

Operations manager at London Irish Rugby Club Richard Watton explains how the new IT infrastructure is already having a huge impact on the club.

"The cloud-based platforms we've gone for have been liberating; staff can now easily work between the training facility in Hazelwood, Surrey, or at the club's ground in Reading's Madejski Stadium, and access key information whenever required."

For example our ticket office personnel, who previously didn't have a connection to the older server, are now in the position where they can access shared drives and documents from any location," he explains. "This is streets ahead of where we were before, where we had to use a data transfer website, which was clunky to use."



Mobility and agility were important factors in designing the IT infrastructure.

Richard goes on to say, *"While in the past the majority of staff had desktops, and the minority laptops, this has now switched around. HP 650 ProBooks have been given to staff who are regularly on the move, while HP ProDesk 400 and ProDesk 600 machines are used for the remaining static machines. This shift to new hardware has also allowed the Club to move away from its old Windows XP machines. LeadingEdge did a great job in transferring all our data like emails to the new environment, something we may have struggled with."*

When asked about the security aspect of the hybrid cloud configuration, Richard's response is *"We're confident that it's safe, we're confident that Microsoft is looking after our data. It's ultimately a trust issue, importantly we trust LeadingEdge to have referred us to the best option available."*

The platform, together with *LeadingCare* managed services, delivers a high performance, reliable and scalable network to support all operations – whether pitch-side or office based.



Coaches, players and supporters benefit from on-premise and pitch-side Wi-Fi.

"We consider ourselves fortunate to have LeadingEdge as part of the team. Why? Because, like us, they know what they're doing and take pride in what they deliver."

*London Irish Operations Manager,
Richard Watton*

The difference

When asked to explain the difference the new IT infrastructure has made to London Irish, Richard explains;

"The challenge is no longer about how to repair, but how to maximise. We know we've got room to grow with a stable platform for the future.

We consider ourselves fortunate to have LeadingEdge as part of the team. Why? Because, like us, they know what they're doing and take pride in what they deliver.

With this project they took time to get into the detail, they listened and understood the ambition. Their strategic approach enables them to consistently articulate the benefits, constraints and implications so that our decision making is properly informed.

We know we can trust LeadingEdge to give us what we actually need, rather than use it as an opportunity to sell and charge. I certainly wouldn't hesitate to recommend them."



Delivering an IT infrastructure that matches the ambitions of the London Irish RFC.

If you're looking for IT service and support aligned to your ambitions, we'd love to talk to you.

You can call us on **0845 644 79 49** or email info@leadingedge.uk.net

LeadingEdge was formed in 2000 as an antidote to those IT businesses that understand everything about technology, and nothing about business. We know an awful lot about technology – but we're business people who understand what it takes to make an organisation successful.

As such, our focus is not on building shiny new tools, but on helping you to use information and communication technology to support your business strategy and help drive business growth.



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