This case study reveals how CHC, an architectural firm, adapted to a new hybrid modern workplace and accomplished a major office move by benefiting from the services of a managed IT services provider in Melbourne, Kaine Mathrick Tech.

The year 2020 changed the world forever. Consequently, the way we work has also changed forever. With sudden shift towards working from home, various hybrid workplace models have been widely adopted – where some employees have resumed to work in office premises while others still work from home, or a percentage of employees commute to work on some days while work from home on other days. It would not be wrong to say that the hybrid workplace is here to stay for a long time to come.

Subsequently, all business will require effective digitization strategy to adapt to new hybrid models. Transformation does not merely mean survival, but rather a unique opportunity to revive the team and offer better work-life balance for all those involved.

Kaine Mathrick Tech helped ClarkeHopkinsClarke, an architecture firm, make a major office relocation and enabled them to provide a new Modern Workplace with Hybrid Working terms for their teams.

# The Client

CHC is an architecture firm with two offices in Melbourne and Sydney. It was founded by three RMIT Architecture graduates Jack Clarke, David Hopkins and Les Clarke. The trio were true believers in the power of architecture to connect people and communities, fulfill needs, and enrich lives.

Jack Clarke was a legend of Australian Rules Football who captained The Bombers to their 1962 Flag and gave his brother Ron, the world-record-breaking distance runner, a run for his money in the fitness department. Jack was a one-off, reserved and hardworking. David Hopkins, on the other hand, was the quintessential extrovert: energetic, charismatic, mischievous. Les Clarke AM was the visionary and unofficial leader of the trio: curious, passionate, humble. He brought out those qualities in others, too, and was a cherished mentor to many of our current leaders right up until his retirement at age 80.

The founding Partners were people’s people, one and all. Optimistic, resourceful, creative. The ink was barely dry on their graduation certificates when they began Clarke & Associates from a small office in Hotham Street, East Melbourne, back in June 1961. By day they learned the ropes in graduate roles with established practices before making the leap into full-time private practice.

The decision to make an office move stemmed from the realization that CHC outgrew their current office space. They needed to make a major office move from Collingwood across to a much larger sized office. CHC had been looking to move for over 4 years as they had well outgrown their location. Collingwood was only built for 50.

Their technology and infrastructure had grown organically as the business grew. Before KMT came onboard, the IT strategy and roadmap was ad hoc and nonexistent. When KMT came on board, the first thing they did was create a technology roadmap and outlined where the technology needed to be to service CHC’s growing business.

CHC also needed to adopt a remote working model during COVID. KMT not only helped them with the office move but also developed a hybrid workplace for them. They were also conscious that moving into a new office location meant that staff would be working differently. They wanted to introduce a new hybrid way of working meaning that their employees had the flexibility to work from the office, home, or remotely seamlessly. They also didn’t want to keep buying hardware and keep investing in things that become redundant such as PC’s and servers, switches. KMT with their advice enabled them to do this.

With all of the cyber-attacks that have occurred around the world, CHC were also very concerned with their cyber security and wanted to ensure that their systems and data are backed up regularly and securely. They are also are considering a full cyber solution, but it is something that they will address as part of future plan.

The main issue was moving from a site with aging infrastructure to a new site with twice the network requirements. Time, vendor stock count, and fiber connectivity were also issues. The current network was sluggish, based on gigabit technology and overall throughput was an issue when sharing data from the servers. Backup times were becoming an issue due to the throughput of the network and the overall size of the data sets.

The solution was to implement a core network capable of scalability as well as interoperability with a technology driven outcome. This involved specialized meeting rooms, booking systems, AV setups as well as virtual calling rooms. Remote access requirements were important as well as hot desking to accommodate staff movements.

# Finding a Partner in KMT

Before KMT, the business was using a company that was a family member of the founders of CHC. They outgrew them and it wasn’t supporting them.

CHC’s partner was introduced to KMT. Miss Courtney, the [Designation] at CHC said, “We assessed them against others and we felt that they were aligned with our business. We were looking for a partnership, not just a supplier. We highly value customer service and take it very seriously in our business and the way we work with our clients and we felt that KMT were the same.”

“The IT industry at the time didn’t have the best reputation where providers would sell the deal and then you would only hear from them over the phone, their service dropped and you were forgotten about. From our first meeting, we knew that KMT were different. We knew that they really cared and that they would do what it takes to make sure that our business reached its full potential,” she said.

She further went on to say how KMT was more than IT support. KMT has a dedicated Account Manager who meets with them every month, and is their key point of contact for any major issues to provide quarterly strategic reviews and ensure that their technology is on track to align with their business goals.

Courtney said, “KMT invested the time in coming on site and getting to know us and our teams during our partnership. Our IT support team are always helpful and go the extra mile to get things done. They really provide a personal approach to delivering their service.”

# KMT Develops the Solution

KMT worked practically within the existing commitments of CHC. Instead of trying to sell an expensive solution, they provided an affordable solution that scaled and rolled out at the client’s pace giving their teams time to settle into the office, get used to the new tools such as Teams Calling (their new cloud-based phone system), and working in a hot desk situation.

Courtney said, “KMT developed a long-term IT strategy and technology road map based on our needs, budget and growth goals which we believe was honest and a best-in-class cloud solution that provided flexibility for users to work from anywhere. Essentially, they work off a server when means that every individual doesn’t need a laptop and they can log in securely from anywhere.”

KMT helped CHC during the office move every step of the way. As a part of the planning, it became an extension of their team, giving them further confidence that their technology was looked after and in good hands.

“We didn’t worry about it knowing that KMT were not only recommending the right solutions, but just doing the right thing. During the move, they were with us every step of the way and were just as excited as our team was. They had teams in over the weekend and they stayed until the job was done. The move was large and we had many moving parts,” she said.

Courtney went on to say, “With 150 staff, there were many desks, printers, photocopiers, teams calling and other technology that had to be set up and ready to go by the Monday so our business could operate as usual. KMT pulled it off with no issues. Over that weekend we knew we didn’t have to worry about IT and left it in their hands. They worked seamlessly with our teams and if we had any questions or issues, they were there and so enjoyable to work with. We had a great time even with the large amount of work and pressure we faced.”

# The Right Technology

KMT provided Fortinet FortiSwitch 10GB core network, extending to Fortinet FortiAP and FortiGate Firewalls. The entire network was redesigned with 10GB in mind, all servers were upgraded to 10GB access directly into the core. VLANS were used to segregate traffic and improve overall throughput of the network.

Management of the entire network was improved by utilizing the Fortinet fabric. All network devices could now be managed via a central portal.

# Achieving Optimal Outcomes

With KMT managing to get the whole system switched over within 48 hours without a hitch, Courtney believes that it meant no downtime for the business with incredible outcome for the teams.

“In regards to the office move, KMT focused on their specialisation. We didn’t need to worry about the IT. We just knew and had confidence that IT was sorted. We didn’t have to direct them or tell them what to do. They followed our program and they just knew what they needed to do. It is just such a great partnership. We took their lead and advice and knew IT was going to be managed properly,” she said.

KMTs IT strategic direction provided a more robust solution that gives longevity. During this process KMT researched and took the time to find the right solutions rather than stop gap fixes to save time. There was an issue with routers and switches and CHC no longer wanted to invest in redundant hardware. KMT took the time to research a viable solution for them and took the time to really look at the best solution.

“We initially used KMT as an Internal IT support team to provide support. They are so much more than that. They provide a team to support our business – the Account Manager on a strategic level, our Customer Experience Manager who ensures our IT support is running smoothly and our teams are supported, and our dedicated IT support team who our teams have gotten to know and rely on,” said Courtney.

KMT managed the IT strategy and is a true extension of their team. Before KMT, their IT staff were the go-to for minor IT issues. Now they could focus on ensuring the business achieves its goals and has the right technology solutions to do so.

“The communication is consistent with all of the team. It’s easy, its enjoyable, pleasant – we just have such a great relationship with KMT. There is such a desire to fix the problem. It makes working on projects so much better and more enjoyable when you have a true partner,” said Courtney. “They put in the hard yards, they were here all weekend on the project and really feel like and extension of your team.”

The staff at CHC also seem to have readily accepted the change. “You cannot put a price on bad IT that doesn’t work. If staff can’t connect or log in, it is detrimental to our efficiency and effectiveness. Our team was properly set up from day one – working on site and within the office. The queries were minimal and the morale was excitement and pleased. The move has given the staff a new lease on life.”

# Building a True Partnership

For CHC, the single biggest reason of what they loved the most about KMT was the partnership, the relationship and customer service. They found KMT to be a true partner and an extension of their practice. “I always have a pleasant experience with your teams. Even if there is a challenge or we are not happy with the outcome, we talk and work through it,” said Courtney. “The team is super knowledgeable, and we know that our IT is looked after and we just don’t have to worry about it. The project was seamless and effortless from our behalf. It was so enjoyable to work with the team. They are easy to work with and we had confidence that our IT was looked after.”

Right from the leadership to the service desk, KMT provided a consistent level of customer service.

“KMT doesn’t fault at any level. Our improvements are continual. We couldn’t operate without a robust set up for efficiency and effectiveness and morale of the team. They are able to work better and faster,” she said.

Prior to the move, KMT were able to install all hardware and test the network. This reduced the amount of downtime for the move. After the move, it provided live support to quickly address any of the issues post migration.

CHC believes that they underwent a smooth transition with short downtime, resulting in an improved technology platform. Describing the benefits achieved out of this transition in three words, CHC terms them as *“growth”, “flexibility”,* and *“productiveness.”*