SPAR ⬧ *There for you*

Over the last decade, Total Computers has provided IT equipment for SPAR UK's central office, including PCs, servers, storage and software licensing, as well as handling projects such as its server virtualisation.

Client

SPAR is the world's largest international food retail chain. In the UK, it is the leading convenience store group, with nearly 2,400 stores and a turnover of more than £3 billion.

Each country's local SPAR organisation is owned and managed independently. SPAR UK is owned by five retail distribution companies, with a central London-based office providing buying, marketing and administration support to the distributors and stores.

Business driver

SPAR UK's central office needed an IT provider that could act as a reliable, trusted partner, and work as a one-stop shop to meet the company's IT needs.

Solution

SPAR has been working with Total as its main IT provider for the UK central office for ten years. Total provides PCs, servers, storage and other equipment, as well as consumables such as printer toner. It also provides services for SPAR as required, such as cabling and managing the company's software licensing.

Benefits

"We've stayed with Total over the years because we have such a good relationship," says Jim Nuth, IT Manager at SPAR UK. "Total are responsive, and understand what we need – if we require something urgently, we just call them and we know it'll be there the next morning, or even the same day if needed."

Jim comments that Total are good at keeping up to date with the latest technology and newest products, and he says, "They have the right technical people, and I can get information when I need it."

"Total can find us anything, including obsolescent products – it doesn't just have to be what's in stock at the main distributor," says Jim. "In the past, they've even sourced items that were no longer being made."

SPAR works with Total on larger projects from time to time, for example on a major migration into a virtualised VMware environment, which required a new server and storage infrastructure. Jim comments, "Total's consultant helped organise the migration, recommend what kit was required, and plan what we needed to do – we got a lot of help from Total."

> "Total goes beyond the call of duty in the projects it does for us," says Jim. "For example, recently they came to put in a couple of cables in a floor box, but then tested the rest of the floor box, and fixed the faults that they found.
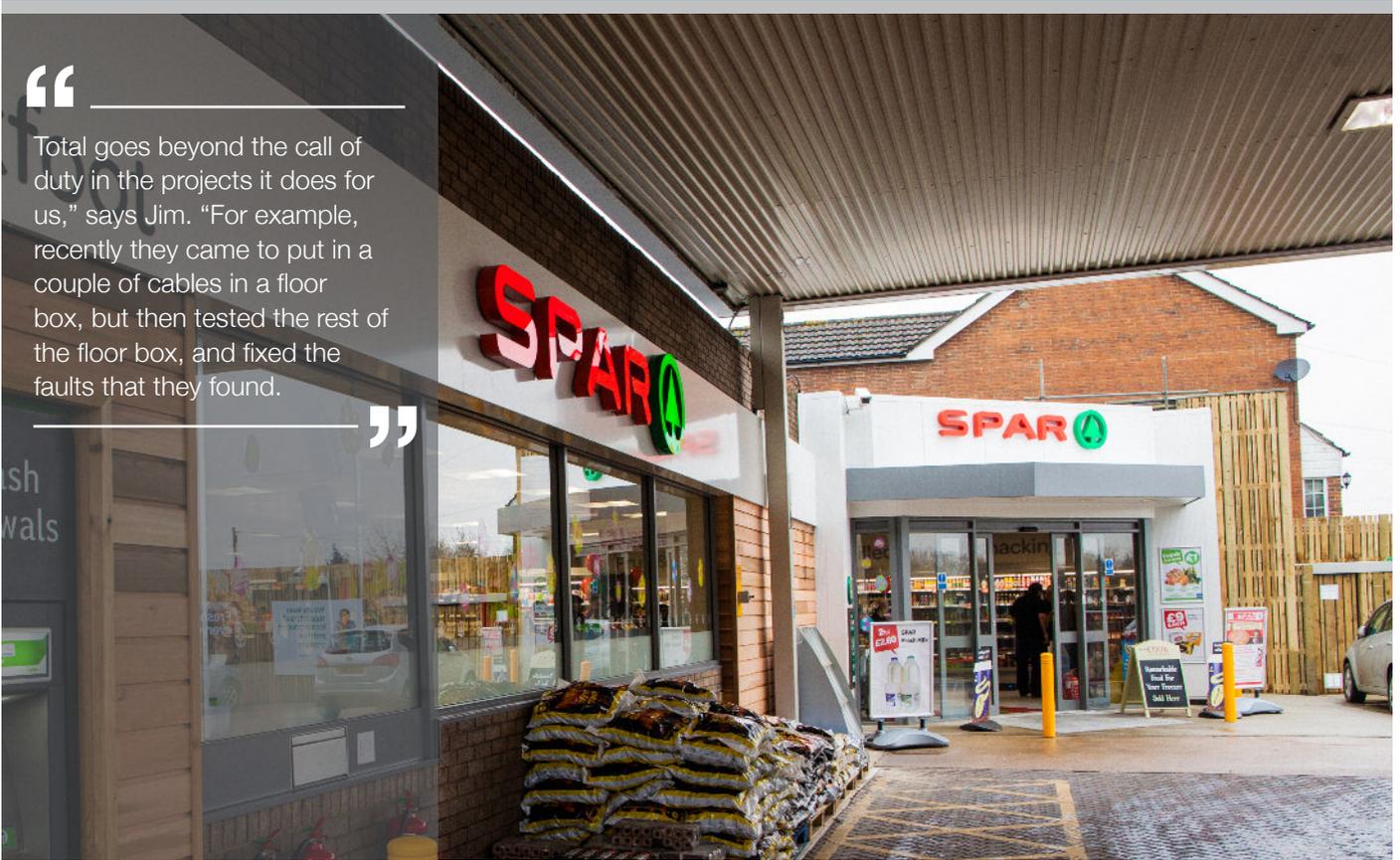
"We went with Total's recommendations for the migration and bought the equipment from them," says Jim. "Everything worked out really well."

With the virtualisation project complete, SPAR reduced its number of physical servers by 80 per cent. The main benefit is in easier and faster data recovery, as Jim explains, "Now, we can recover a whole server in a couple of minutes with half a dozen button clicks – before, recovering a physical server involved retrieving backup tapes, and could take days."

The virtualised solution has also enabled SPAR to replicate its data from its main storage area network (SAN) to a second SAN at another location, giving it an offsite backup and hence improving the resilience of its data.

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Total manages SPAR's licensing, and has also assisted it with a Microsoft license audit. "That was invaluable – I was scratching my head trying to figure out what Microsoft wanted, and Total helped me sort it all out," comments Jim.

"We've got more projects coming up for which we plan to work with Total, such as migrating to a new IP phone system," says Jim. "I feel confident that whatever I throw at them, they can help."

"The relationship with Total is more like working with a friend or colleague than with a supplier – it's always a good, friendly atmosphere, and I can phone, text or email whenever I need," concludes Jim. "I would recommend them unreservedly."