

# Youth hostels come of age

Earlier this year Glasgow dealer Workflo Solutions worked with Olivetti to complete a major installation for the Scottish Youth Hostel Association

**Founded in early 2007** by Michael Field and Allan McKay, Glasgow-based Workflo Solutions has built up over 30 years' industry experience. It has established itself as one of Scotland's most dynamic suppliers of multifunctional photocopy, print and scan systems as well as document archive and retrieval software. Its strong partnerships with Olivetti, Ricoh and Infotec allow it to offer clients what it believes is the best copy, print and scan technology available in the market.

Earlier this year the company installed into the head offices of the Scottish Youth Hotel Association in Stirling, a 45ppm Olivetti full colour d-Color MF450 model, which is configured with full network printing, copying and scanning facilities, booklet-making, stapling, finishing and tri-fold finishing and a 25ppm multifunctional d-Copia 2500MF printer/copier, with colour scanning. It also placed a de-featured 20ppm Olivetti d-Color MF201 into the Edinburgh and Inverness Regional offices, which is ideal for the output of black and white printing and copying, with occasional colour.

Not many people know that the Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA) is a charitable organisation, established in 1931 and funded, in part, by members of the Association. Their objectives

include 'the advancement of education, for the public benefit, by helping all, especially young people, to experience and appreciate the countryside, environment, natural heritage and places of historical interest, through the promotion of their health, recreation and education, through low-cost accommodation for them on their travels'.

The SYHA is, in fact, Scotland's largest network of tourist hostels, with around 45 locations, providing over 500,000 bed-nights each year. The SYHA actively markets its locations to everyone, including families and overseas and corporate visitors which are proving to be extremely popular, especially with the recent downturn in the economy.

Many of the Scottish hostels are in remote locations, which have to be managed and maintained to ever-increasing high standards and to levels of technological advancement which has become the norm among travellers.

One of the main aspects that is of vital importance is the bespoke Reservation System. Bookings can be made on-line or via the SYHA Reservations Team, and individual hostels can book ahead to other locations, on behalf of residents who are planning further over-night stays.

**Last year the SYHA** employed Bob McMeekin to run its IT Department, based in Stirling. He, along with three other colleagues, analysed the computer systems which support the 60 Scottish hostels, its Reservations Department and all the day-to-day running of the organisation.

"The immediate challenge was to try to streamline the operation with a system that had no fewer than 23 servers," Bob explains. "Members access the Reservations system for making enquiries and booking accommodation via our Reservations Department or the SYHA website, but to improve things we had to look at how we could consolidate our systems whilst ensuring that the demands of both internal users and customers was met. Over the next 12 months we reduced the number of servers down to three by implementing a virtual server solution."



Workflo's Michael Field and Allan McKay

# News feature

Workflo Solutions - case study

“We offer a non-aggressive approach to our customers and are committed to working with our clients to give them flexibility and build a lasting partnership”

One of the other aspects that needed attention was the Association's office equipment, within the head office and at the hostels. Not only was the printing, copying and fax equipment very old but it was starting to prove very expensive and unreliable and the lack of functionality was holding the staff back from being productive, efficient and creative.

Work had already started on the quotation process and Bob found there were quite a few different suppliers involved, but with only a few days until the final decision was made, Michael Field, Director of Livingston-based Workflo Solutions, contacted Bob and asked if his company could show him how they could save money. As this was one of the main deciding factors, Bob couldn't resist the opportunity.

“Michael's attitude was very different to the rest of the suppliers we were speaking to”, says Bob. “He was very keen, up-front and really went the extra mile. We were able to put the models being quoted through their paces, so we could see whether the machines were relevant to the business. We soon realised we had found our preferred supplier.”

Michael Field describes Workflo's methods as progressive. “We offer a non-aggressive approach to our customers and are committed to working with our clients to give them flexibility and build a lasting partnership. It's the same with our own suppliers. We work in partnership with Olivetti, who have 100 years of experience behind them. We supply the full range of Olivetti products from their high performance multi-functional solutions to the very small models used for more basic applications. We felt the SYHA could, instantly, save themselves about 20 per cent on the costs of their existing equipment, and then, over time, make substantial savings that could be spent elsewhere within the organisation. It's all about making sure you have the right product for the right application.”

Bob McMeekin says “Before these machines were installed, we had only very limited colour printing capability in-house. Our Reservations Department is now producing our RentaHostel leaflets in full colour, which were previously in black and white. Our internal documents are so much better in colour, more interesting, and our Membership Renewal Documents are also in full colour. The team is now able to be even more creative and the documentation looks so professional.”

Michael and his Workflo team has, in only two trips, travelled to the various hostel locations



to install small 18ppm multi-functional laser copier, printer, scanners, the Olivetti d-Copia 18MF, with document feeders and fax option.

These have been perfect to allow the managers of the hostels to print, copy, scan and fax from one machine, linked to the SYHA's network, allowing documents to be printed quickly, faxed to other locations, for forwardbookings, and for printing out, in high quality, notices for residents and bills for when they leave.

As a result of the combination of increased equipment functionality, the updated IT network and a progressive vision for the future, SYHA is starting to install Internet Kiosks in a number of their Hostels, offering WiFi connection.

They are also considering providing colour printing on-site, to allow residents to download local information and maps and print them out in full colour. But as Bob says: “We will still remain true to our philosophy, though. We need to be mindful of the environment, so the printers are chosen for their environmentally friendly components and operation, which is a big consideration for our remote Eco-Hostel, based at the end of a mile-long walking track, Loch Ossian, with its wind and solar-powered electricity, water-recycling programme and general ‘back-to-nature’ facilities.”

In summarising the on-going implementation, Bob McMeekin says “This is one of those projects that had the potential to be very stressful but, with suppliers like Workflo I know we will succeed. Our working relationship is very good; their service and responsiveness is excellent and they have the knowledge and support to help SYHA see this project through. That's what partners are for in my book”. ■

## Contact details

[www.workflo-solutions.co.uk](http://www.workflo-solutions.co.uk)