

Nominee: Six Degrees Group Ltd

Nomination Managed Service Provider of the Year

How long has this organisation been involved in the IT services and solutions market in EMEA?

Established in 2011, Six Degrees Group is a converged technology infrastructure provider that is transforming the managed services landscape in the UK mid-market.

Six Degrees has invested in its own data centres, cloud platforms, next generation data network and voice switching capability and uses these core assets to develop, manage and support its unique portfolio of solutions. The company has grown both organically and through acquisition.

In June 2015, Charlesbank Capital Partners entered into an agreement to acquire Six Degrees from original owner Penta Capital, giving it a significant pool of funding to continue to undergo both organic and acquisitive transformation.

Acquisitions within the last year have included Insite, a managed cloud provider specialising in Microsoft, and Carrenza, a cloud service provider focused on providing cloud services to corporate customers and government bodies.

Are there any key projects delivered in the last year that demonstrate this candidate's suitability for the award?

A key project delivered by Six Degrees within the last 12 months was for The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP), a consortium of seven schools based in the Midlands and comprising of three secondary schools and four primary schools.

To cope with increasing student user demand and streamline communication and collaboration between the schools, Six Degrees Group assisted the ATLP with deploying a seamless, organisation-wide migration from its existing on-premises email and Microsoft Office applications systems to a hybrid cloud solution through the Office 365 platform. To avoid disruption to learning or working activities, the project involved the overnight migration of the data of approximately

4,500 students and staff to their new Exchange environments, while ensuring that the data would be located within the EU at all times, thus complying with data governance regulations.

The ATLP appointed Six Degrees Group to manage and execute the project due to the close relationship of one its key suppliers with Microsoft and the range of on-premises, privately hosted and Azure cloud services offered across the Microsoft technology stack. The Six Degrees supplier, being a Microsoft expert consultant, was able to engage at all stages of the project from planning through to delivery and migration.

As such Six Degrees deployed the Microsoft Office 365 solution due to its ready-made integration capabilities with the schools' existing Microsoft deployments. The end-result has been increased efficiency in collaboration and communication between the schools and students, a remotely delivered IT service and for students and staff, remote access to files at any time.

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership is now evaluating other ways that cloud services can be integrated into their organisation to strengthen the services delivered to students.

The institution recognises that due to the complex environment it is likely that a hybrid cloud approach will continue to be adopted, where some services remain on-site, some are delivered by third party specialist providers, and others are consumed from the cloud.

What key vendor and industry accreditations does the nominee hold?

Six Degrees has the following industry accreditations:

ISO/IEC 27001 - an international certification that ensures that Six Degree's core platforms (datacentres and networks), billing, data management, fulfilment and support meet the standards for information security.

ISO 9001 - certifies Six Degree's Quality Management System (QMS) for consultancy, design, build and support of managed hosting services to businesses on a worldwide basis using Cloud Computing Technologies.

PCI DSS - a set of comprehensive standards for ensuring the security of financial payment data.

Six Degrees Group is an accredited Investors in People organisation, and was one of the first UK organisations to be a participant in the 2016 EU Code of Conduct for Energy Efficiency in Data Centres.

What endorsements does that nominee have from their customers and/or their technology partners?

Chris Butler, Head of IT Delivery at the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, said: “The Microsoft solution deployed by Six Degrees not only brought many technology benefits to the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, but it also gives us access to the strategic foresight of a worldwide technology provider such as Microsoft about how we should be aligning our IT environments to achieve the partnership’s operational objectives.”

Nathan Bishop, Group IT Services Director at Grafton Group said, “We have a long standing, strong and positive relationship with Six Degrees that has developed since we started using its data centre facilities. As our company has grown, our IT needs have become increasingly complex. Six Degrees provides us with a managed solution that will not only bring our systems up to date, but future-proof them. Using the Six Degrees infrastructure allows all of our businesses to stay connected 24/7, with no worries of overloading the systems or unwelcome downtime”.

Greg Morley, Head of IT, United Living Group, a leader in provisioning affordable housing said; “Six Degrees has provided us with an integrated and sophisticated network that meets our everyday and future business demands. We are now one of the largest providers of affordable housing and sustainable solutions in the UK and downtime is simply not an option. With Six Degrees, we get peace of mind knowing that we have a resilient provider behind us. Six Degrees is a breath of fresh air.”

Please highlight any particular aspects of customer services delivered as part of the program(s).

Six Degrees works closely with all of its customers to ensure that each solution is made to measure and managed effectively.

Six Degrees allocates each of its customers a dedicated account manager, showing it is committed to excellent customer services. Each is an expert in their field and trained on all areas of the Group's portfolio. They regularly visit customers and are their first point of contact.

One example of the effectiveness of Six Degrees' customer service is the expansion of their service provision for Grafton Group. The quality and stability of service that Grafton has experienced from Six Degrees has led to it becoming a trusted partner of the building group. Based on this relationship and following a competitive tender process, Grafton Group has chosen Six Degrees to provision its new Managed Network Solution

Why nominee should win

Six Degrees Group:

- Has invested in its own cloud platforms, data centres, next generation data network and voice-switching infrastructure.
- Is committed to delivering application performance management, monitoring, reporting and security for its customers.
- Has combined the specialities of the 19 acquisitions made since being founded to align with advanced, converged and partner solution areas.
- Has strong accreditations, and is one of the first UK organisations to be a participant in the 2016 EU Code of Conduct for Energy Efficiency in Data Centres.
- Has the strongest end-to-end, core-to-edge capabilities in the mid-market space.
- Has achieved the Silver 'Investors in People' accreditation.