Case Study

Private cloud provides highly available and resilient website for Foxtons

Foxtons selected Six Degrees Group to support their innovative and interactive award-winning website

Introduction

Foxtons is renowned as being one of the most innovative and forward-thinking residential estate agents in London. It has grown rapidly since its launch in 1981, opening 58 offices across London, Middlesex and Surrey. These offices manage thousands of properties, all of which are visible on the estate agent’s interactive and award-winning website, Foxtons.co.uk. Over the past three decades the estate agent has become well known for embracing change, with its online capabilities and presence having to keep pace in order to reflect the ever-changing demands of its customers.

The challenge

Foxtons entire operation is underpinned by the company website. It’s predominantly a customer’s first point of engagement and also acts as a vital, experience-enhancing, self-service information hub. Their website features interactive floorplans, 360° virtual tours, numerous colour photographs, slide shows, local information, location maps, aerial views and full colour brochures for every property they promote. With the property market constantly evolving, the website has also adapted to serve as an online portal for landlords and tenants to sign documents electronically, manage and find the right properties, as well as the ability to arrange secure payments and access online statements.

Foxtons team of expert IT developers had built the impressive applications and functionalities behind the website but knew there was a technology gap between their developments and the performance ability of the estate agent’s current infrastructure. The company needed a secure, resilient hosting environment to ensure the website achieved optimum performance in an increasingly competitive market.

The solution

Foxtons engaged Six Degrees Group (6DG) to design and provide a managed hosting environment that would support their current and future website requirements. 6DG deployed a dual-site, highly-available and scalable web-hosting platform with a fully managed backup and disaster recovery solution. The primary environment consists of the 6DG cloud pod – 6DG’s specialist virtual private cloud environment – located in 6DG’s own highly secure, managed datacentre in Birmingham. The cloud hosting platform consists of two cloud web servers plus a back-end database, virtual firewall and virtual load balancer. As it is fully scalable, the private cloud configuration allows for additional resources (physical and/or virtual) to be added, facilitating either short-term bursting or long-term growth. For added resiliency the solution is geo-replicated on 6DG’s private cloud platform in London. This allows for full disaster recovery.

To support the solution, 6DG has deployed an MPLS network directly into the virtual private cloud. This has provided Foxtons with a private, secure connection to its cloud platform. The network is completely resilient with the ability to re-route in less than 50 milliseconds and is capable of keeping traffic flowing to the website 24/7. 6DG’s self-healing network means that if a fault were ever to occur, neither Foxtons nor its customers using the site would notice a thing.

The benefits

The 6DG team recognises how crucial the Foxtons website is to its business functionality. It’s the estate agent’s always-on customer-facing platform and is the first place any potential sellers, buyers, landlords and tenants look when starting their property search.

The Foxtons website now benefits from a two-site primary and secondary hosting platform, allowing the site to function with zero downtime. Working with the experts at 6DG also means that the Foxtons IT team has total flexibility. They are able to pick up the phone and talk to 6DG at any time.

Leo Lapworth, Web Manager, Foxtons said: “With the constant change and development in the property market it’s important for us to keep ahead of the curve. Having an innovative, interactive website is an important part of what sets Foxtons apart from the rest of the market. For our sellers, landlords, tenants and buyers operating in a hectic market it’s important to be able to manage and find the right properties, as well as the ability to arrange secure payments online. The team at 6DG understands how important the website is to our business. They have helped us to create a unique hosting platform that can support the website as Foxtons continues to meet the changing needs of the London property market.”

About Six Degrees Group

Six Degrees Group is a privately owned managed data services provider serving UK mid-market customers. The Group has a converged services portfolio – including datacentre, connectivity, voice and cloud offerings – designed to help companies meet the challenges of a connected, always-on world.

For more information Tel 0800 012 80 60 Email info@6dg.co.uk

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