



Agricultural specialists reap savings with Business Plan

HARDI Ltd, distributors of high-end farm machinery, signed up for reliability and cost-savings when they joined BT's Business Plan call package

HARDI Ltd is the wholly owned subsidiary of Danish parent company, HARDI International. The Rugby-based concern distributes agricultural and amenity sprayers that are manufactured and assembled by its parent at the latter's Taastrup factory and assembly plant.

HARDI Ltd is part of an international network of dedicated suppliers – which includes operatives in North America, Australia and Spain – that all help contribute to the £4m annual turnover that is the HARDI success story.

“We sell bespoke systems,” explains HARDI Ltd's financial controller, David Taylor. “Big machines that farmers and agricultural workers use to spray crops.” In fact, HARDI systems are a familiar sight on British farms – huge pieces of machinery with boom attachments that hang over the crops and release whatever chemical treatment is required.

“Our systems are completely configurable,” comments Taylor. “Customers can dictate what they want relative to the type of crop they are treating, the size of the field they are working in, even down to the colour of upholstery and type of radio they prefer in the driver's cab.”

Communications is high on the HARDI Ltd agenda, not least because all technical data and software are kept at the company's Denmark HQ; HARDI distribution companies around the globe access system specifications and the like electronically.

Because reliability is such a critical factor, HARDI Ltd has maintained its relationship with a single communications supplier since its inception in the early 1990s. That supplier is BT. “We have never used another supplier,” confirms Taylor. “We've been consistently courted by competitors but because we rely totally on our communications for talking with our customers and exchanging data with Denmark, we simply can't risk a change.”

Taylor adds: “I had a bad experience in the past; I want to stick with a supplier that I know is going to be around for a long time and is very reliable.

“Over the years, BT has proved cost-effective as well. We may have been able to save a few pennies elsewhere, but money isn't always the overriding factor.”

But cost-effectiveness is proving even more deliverable now that HARDI has signed up for BT's Business Plan call package. The ICT solutions provider contacted HARDI in January 2003 to pitch the plan. Taylor signed up almost immediately.



“The most attractive aspect of the plan is undoubtedly the 10p local and national call cap,” says Taylor. “Most of our calls are either national or international, so costs can really mount up. The national call cap has definitely made a difference.”

He estimates savings of up to 17% on quarterly phone bills but there were other aspects of the Plan that also proved attractive.

“Some of the service features were also very appealing,” Taylor confirms. “In fact, I’d describe the return of the dedicated account managers as critical.”

Taylor says he remembers bygone days when dedicated managers were standard on all accounts. He suggests services have suffered generally since the ‘AM’s’ demise. “BT have done really well to bring back this feature,” he enthuses. “Account managers may not always know the answer to your question, but they’ll know a man who does, and I simply don’t have the time to do the phoning and get passed around. One point of contact is an excellent feature.”

Taylor concludes: “One of the key things about the Plan is its simplicity. It’s very easy to understand, very easy to see and calculate the benefits.”