

A photograph of three men in dark suits and light-colored shirts standing in an office hallway. The man in the foreground is bald and smiling slightly. The man in the middle has short brown hair and a neutral expression. The man in the background has dark hair and is also smiling slightly. The hallway has glass walls and a blue carpet.

Talking about my generation

An increasing number of companies are outsourcing their IT needs to specialist consultancies. Next Generation IT foresaw this trend and launched in 2003. Now it is one of the leading IT outsourcing specialists in the island, but what is the secret of its success and what does the future hold? →



Matt Hale, co-founder of Next Generation IT

Just over a decade ago the use of IT was barely recognisable, compared to its use today. Companies were just beginning to explore the massive impact that IT – computers, servers, emails etc. – could have on their day to day operations...

This explosion in the use of IT was the catalyst for NGIT co-founder Matt Hale beginning his career in IT.

'I had always been interested in technology but after school I was guided into finance and spent six years as a trust administrator. Then a role came up which required a knowledge of trust and an interest in computers so I applied. Jobs like that simply don't come up any more but it was perfect timing for me,' he said.

Matt spent six years as IT manager at Saffery Champness. When the management broke away to form Artemis, Matt was one of the few handpicked to move with them. His trust and IT experience meant he was able to set up all of their systems to suit their individual needs and he stayed with them for two years.

The beginning

While working for Artemis, Matt had begun to talk to Tom Heyworth about the possibility of setting up an IT consultancy. Tom was working as the lead consultant at another local IT company, and between them, they shared a vision for the next generation of IT company where focus on the customer is key.

'We realised that businesses were struggling to understand the language many specialist IT companies were speaking, and that they wanted more than just a standard break-fix service. Businesses needed help with all aspects of technology to support their ongoing operations and to help them to achieve growth,' said Matt.

'They required a more bespoke service with expert assistance with everything from planning their IT

infrastructure, liaising with third party software providers, proactive maintenance of their IT systems, to supporting their staff on a day to day basis. We wanted to create a unique IT company, which above all is easy to deal with, understands its clients' business and is responsive to its client's needs. This company would become an extension of its clients' businesses looking after all aspects of technology; someone its clients can rely on for good advice and reliable service.'

Matt approached his employer Artemis' managing director Robert Sinclair who supported the idea of establishing the new business and became Next Generation IT's first client.

NGIT now employs eight full-time staff including a third director Jason Connolly, and continues to grow steadily. Having recently doubled its office space at Sydney Vane House, NGIT expects to increase the number of employees by the end of the year.

'It's a balancing act between growth and maintaining the level of service our clients have come to expect. NGIT has been built on providing a boutique service that is personalised to the client. Our clients know our staff and so we need to ensure that as

we grow, we don't move away from those core values which is what our reputation is based on,' said Tom.

NGIT provides a wide range of IT services but specialises in:

- Outsource and IT helpdesk solutions
- HP and Dell hardware
- PC installations and rollouts
- Virtualisation solutions and Storage Area Networks (private clouds)
- Server hosting and DR solutions
- Microsoft operating systems and software
- Email & document management systems
- Fixed and wireless network design
- In-depth experience in internet systems and connectivity
- Cisco, Checkpoint and Sonicwall firewall implementation and support
- External and internal systems security solutions

'As well as providing a dependable service, we are also very proactive. It's not just a case of fix it and move on, it's about being part of the client's team and having a flexible approach – every company is different,' said Jason.

'The very personal service we offer means that our clients get to know our staff and so we need to ensure that they have the knowledge and experience to meet expectations. One of the biggest challenges we face is recruiting the right people, with the right skills set and more importantly with the right attitude,'

The future

With the hype surrounding cloud computing, companies could be forgiven for thinking that every organisation should be on the cloud. Many organisations are promoting cloud computing as the development that will fundamentally change the way IT is used. But those in the know disagree.

Cloud computing is simply the provision of software and services over the internet. This enables organisations to flexibly buy-in specific applications, or their entire IT systems, without investing in infrastructure

'There are specific local challenges to widespread use of cloud computing. For many organisations, it is imperative that they retain control of their data and that information is kept within the jurisdiction. The risk of dealing with unfamiliar off-island organisations is too great,' said Matt.

NGIT provide a local solution called Office Anywhere, where all hardware, software, support and maintenance is provided in Guernsey, giving each company a shared area to store files,

access to Microsoft Word, Excel and an email system. Clients access their fully-managed system from any web-enabled PC, anywhere in the world.

'This is particularly important for start-ups as it ensures that valuable capital is not tied up and also provides a system that can flex with the business as it grows. We monitor and maintain the system to ensure it is always operating in optimum condition, we backup all data and in the event of a disaster we maintain a second backup system in a local data centre,' said Jason.

'There are currently limitations to cloud computing, which means that as a business grows in size and complexity of its needs, then they are better off with their own dedicated and more flexible system. But, the good news is that all of the benefits of cloud computing are available to local businesses through a traditional outsourcing model and a private (in-house) cloud using virtualisation technology'

Tom believes that the future will see a refinement of technology which will further enhance the way companies operate.

'One example is disaster recovery as now it's simply not necessary for companies to spend thousands of pounds renting DR space. Resilient IT systems, which can continue to work even after hardware failures, mean that 9 out of 10 invocations can be avoided altogether. To satisfy the other 10% of invocations, we provide an innovative virtual disaster recovery system, where we regularly take an image of each customer's IT systems, and restore to our hosted systems at NGIT,' he said.

'In the event of a disaster, we can bring the client's IT systems up in a fraction of the time taken to rebuild their systems from scratch and restore from tape. Clients generally take a small DR suite from us for a core team of essential workers, and we provide remote access to their system for the majority of their staff to work from home, enabling them to make significant savings.'

NGIT also believes that electronic document management will be increasing popular as it allows the organisation of records and correspondence into a single, centralised electronic system.

This provides the capability to scan paper files and correspondence, and integrate with office applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel so that all documents can be stored together. Documents can be filed into a client structure and

indexed for future retrieval and allows staff to search documents for individual words or phrases

'Recently, document management systems have adapted to provide tight integration with e-mail software enabling e-mails to be quickly filed against a client without significantly interrupting the process of sending and receiving e-mails,' said Jason.

'The new generation of document management systems improves on that by suggesting the location to store e-mails. This level of automation increases office productivity, and also assists with compliance as correspondence is saved against the relevant client file.

'It's another fascinating development within IT, and it is our role as IT consultants to enable local businesses to embrace IT as a force for good rather than a necessary evil, to maintain their competitive position, increase organisational effectiveness and contribute towards their continued future success.'

What clients say

'Strong client relationships and excellent personal service are the key to the Long Port Group. NGIT shares our philosophy and we have a mutually beneficial partnership.'

*Charles Billson,
chairman, Long Port Group*

'We have been using NGIT for our IT outsourcing since their inception in 2003. During this period, we have found that they not only have the scope and expertise to deal with the needs of a large multinational group such as JLT but also maintain a personal approach to their service which is unparalleled.'

*Nick Wild, executive chairman,
JLT Insurance Management
(Guernsey) Ltd*

'Since 2004, NGIT has provided an IT outsource service to Artemis. Since then we have grown as an organisation and NGIT has supported us through our continuing expansion, enabling us to focus on our business with the reassurance that our IT infrastructure would cope with growing demand. We have found NGIT to be proactive, helpful, approachable and most of all dedicated to providing us with a modern, safe and secure IT system.'

*Robert Sinclair,
managing director, Artemis Trustees*