



*“We needed to change tact. Continuing to manage IT as an internal function was no longer viable - we needed a specialist provider like blueAPACHE.”*

**Chris Palin**  
Finance Director  
KWB Group

**blue**APACHE

## KWB Group reduce downtime, increase business productivity and secure business continuity.

When Chris Palin joined Australian Kitchen Industries in 2010, the company was owned by a private equity fund, had a history of marginal profits and faced a board of directors in favour of closing the business and walking away. After a management buyout in 2012, KWB Group was formed and an internal restructure commenced that focused on trimming away the excess and running a tighter business.

### THE CHALLENGE

KWB Group is the largest standalone kitchen retailer in Queensland and South Australia, with 13 retail stores and 100 permanent staff. Taking into account the drivers, sub-contractors and other tradesmen that the business relies upon, the IT department are responsible for more than 150 people.

With the former business in a precarious position, Chris and his team recognised the need to pare back costs.

The number of retail stores was cut by half, with existing business services redeployed. The company also made the decision to retain the existing IT architecture, but move to a more flexible, scalable outsourced model. They wanted to reduce ongoing investment in infrastructure and resources, while creating a platform for growth. The challenge was identifying how, and sourcing the right partner.

### THE SOLUTION

blueAPACHE was brought on board to help stabilise the technology platform. The company's IT administration had invested heavily in development, but there had been a lack of spending on core infrastructure. Working closely with Chris and his team, blueAPACHE bolstered the core network infrastructure, and suggested redirecting funds into a more robust server architecture.

Chris stated “the advice was sound, and we came to rely on blueAPACHE's knowledge from that point onwards. A critical thing for us was the loyalty we formed during the early part of our business relationship, when the company was undergoing a lot of change.”

blueAPACHE now manages KWB Group's systems from their cloud-based IT as a Service (ITaaS) model - from applications, data storage and disaster recovery, to office and retail outlet phone systems.



#### About KWB Group

KWB Group is comprised of the brands Kitchen Connection and Wallspan. The company is Australian owned and operated. Kitchen Connection is Australia's fastest-growing kitchen retailer.

#### DETAILS

- ▶ Largest independent kitchen retailers in QLD and SA with 13 retail outlets.
- ▶ 100 permanent staff and more than 50 sub-contractors.

#### CHALLENGES

- ▶ Migrating all services and applications to a centralised platform.
- ▶ Increasing performance, flexibility, and financial visibility.
- ▶ Improving business continuity posture.

#### SERVICES

- ▶ emPOWER Managed Services.
- ▶ emPOWER Cloud.
- ▶ emPOWER Disaster Recovery.
- ▶ emPOWER Network.
- ▶ emPOWER Voice.

#### RESULTS

- ▶ Moved technology to a true ITaaS model, improving reliability with minimal capital outlay.
- ▶ Significant improvements in network performance, scalability and agility.
- ▶ Gained disaster recovery to ensure business continuity.

Prior to outsourcing, the company loaded all software onto individual PCs, with the onus of licensing, renewals and end-of-life falling to the in-house IT administrators. Now, the ITaaS model allows much greater flexibility, and the burden of providing smooth networking and applications falls to blueAPACHE who have more resources and wider expertise.

Staff at KWB Group are now able to log onto any device in the company's ecosystem and access their personal files and applications. Where previously the information was locked down to an individual's computer, the new system allows staff to access work from home, when traveling, or from remote locations, a flexibility that greatly increases productivity.

Chris said "within the cloud environment, I can walk up to a computer, log on through Citrix, and I am at work within a minute, with full access to my files. Since I travel a fair bit, this is very productive for me."

The scalability of the ITaaS model allows KWB Group to expand much more easily than before, reducing limitations and simplifying new store openings. Effectively, 'switching on' a new retail outlet takes one phone call to blueAPACHE, a reliable link and a router on site.

"We can plug everything in and have it work straight away. There is a lot less complexity than before," said Chris.

When floods recently hit Queensland, KWB Group was able to close at-risk retail outlets, and by requesting that blueAPACHE re-route phones to another store, were able to maintain business operations without serious interruption.

Chris also cites the depth of staffing as another strong benefit of the outsourced model. "Whether we need someone strategic, business focused or a technical specialist, we have access to them through the extensive pool of resources at blueAPACHE."

#### THE RESULTS

Over time, KWB Group has moved all systems and infrastructure across to blueAPACHE's fully-managed service platform.

Under the new management team, KWB Group has taken much of the past two years to get the company onto neutral ground. Now, with balance-sheets back in the black, the company is "charging ahead" debt free.

"We are in a healthy position, recording good profits again. The company is rapidly becoming a success story," said Chris.

Having reduced staff and retail stores as well as cutting expenditure across the board, the company was governed by need to find better, more efficient ways to operate.

"We run a fairly tight ship, with not many administrative staff," said Chris. "We treat blueAPACHE very much as our IT managers, so they are always involved in major decisions, such as opening new stores.

"The breadth of knowledge is really a major advantage, because we would otherwise need lots of people with wide expertise or to bring in outsiders because you simply can't know it all. Using a managed services provider, you get that breadth of knowledge."

The transition to a fully managed services platform was easy for KWB Group. blueAPACHE had a dedicated team working on the project and provided plenty of testing. Once the new solution was ready to deploy, it was simply a matter switching it over.

KWB Group was able to open the doors the next morning and continue work, with any issues resolved back at blueAPACHE by a dedicated technician who was assigned to the job and offered full support post deployment.

"It really was one of the better roll-outs I have experienced. blueAPACHE ensured it was seamless," said Chris. "It was incredibly successful, and we couldn't achieve the same outcome ourselves."