

# FIRST RESPONSE FINANCE



**First Response**  
take care of your finance

**IT'S fair to say that 2020 was a challenging year for everyone; from small-scale home businesses to global corporations, the effects of coronavirus on the world will be felt for many years to come.**

But for award-winning First Response Finance, who employ almost 300 members of staff and have offices in Nottingham, Glasgow and Leigh, the challenges most businesses faced when Prime Minister Boris Johnson told us all to work from home, weren't quite as daunting.

The vehicle finance company, who specialise in Hire Purchase for used cars, motorbikes and vans, had been working with Axess Systems - one of the country's leading IT infrastructure providers and Citrix specialists - as a support partner for more than five years.

Prior to the pandemic, the two businesses had been looking at solutions which would enable First Response Finance to implement cost-effective IT systems; offering flexibility for staff, enhanced user experience, providing an efficient service to the customer, enhancing security - and generally making life for their IT team a little less stressful.

"I think it's fair to say that IT managers have been unsung heroes during the pandemic," said Andrew Miles, account manager at Axess Systems.

"Because we had already started implementing this strategy for First Response Finance using Citrix as an enabler to the business, it meant that, when coronavirus restrictions were put in place, they were ahead of the game.

"They wanted a Citrix Managed Service which was efficient; something which offered peace of mind, gave them ongoing support and ensured that they continued to get the very best return on their IT investment. They also wanted to offer their staff the option of remote working - before working from home became an order from the Government.

"With Axess Systems as their provider - we are one of only a few UK-based businesses to be awarded the prestigious Citrix Customer success preferred partner status - they now have that and, when their staff had to work remotely last year, it was a seamless transition, as the infrastructure was already in place and working well. Citrix has given them a great end-user experience."

**Early feedback has been extremely positive.**

Neil Raspison, IT infrastructure engineer with First Response Finance, is delighted with the service and flexibility that Citrix Service Provider (CSP) offers.

He said: "Citrix gives us exactly what we need for our business to continue to be successful during what has been one of the most challenging times in recent history.

"Citrix gives First Response Finance a convenient, secure infrastructure which, as a finance company, is important to us. Staff simply go to their web browsers and don't have to worry about signing into a VPN; logging in is quick and the whole process has been virtually problem-free; any early teething problems - and there were very few - have been dealt with quickly and efficiently.

"The CSP programme allows our employees to access cloud-enabled workspace services without the cost and complexity normally associated with digital workspaces; there is a pay monthly scheme we have chosen which suits our business perfectly as we look to thrive post-pandemic.

“First Response Finance now have a new fit for purpose solution and the CSP programme means that they are investing in the business with more predictable costs, allowing them to invest elsewhere in the business.

“We plan on rolling the system out to the rest of our workforce in future and like that Citrix CSP gives us a customer-edge, ensuring that what we’re delivering is valuable.”

Implementation of the project was quick, simple and, as Neil says, very hands-on.

“John (Middleton) from Axess Systems was brilliant with us,” he said, “and rather than coming into the business and taking it all on himself, he involved me in the process and I learned a lot.”

Kris Haynes is Axess Systems’ Head of Pre-Sales and was heavily involved in the project. He said: “Many businesses are unsure as to, once coronavirus restrictions are fully lifted, exactly what office-based working will look like.

“For many – including Axess Systems and First Response Finance – some form of hybrid working is likely be adopted, so flexibility is important;

Citrix will play a big part in helping businesses work successfully in future because, with Citrix, you get ongoing continuity and, wherever you’re working, you have an efficient, reliable system.”

Although they’re champions of Citrix it wasn’t until the coronavirus pandemic hit that Axess Systems were forced to put into practice what they preach.

Kris said: “For me, the first part of the pandemic involved working from home and homeschooling my twin girls, who are both six. Trying to be on Microsoft Teams whilst maintaining a full-time job, plus making sure that the girls were both doing their school work, was a challenge; my wife had to work weekends and the kids were becoming anxious and stressed.

“The second lockdown, when the children were able to go back to school, was a little less stressful. I had more of a structured routine in place and, thanks to Citrix, work productivity remained the same – in fact, my productivity actually increased as I was able to conduct interviews with clients at home and would often undertake two or three a day, rather



than having to jump in the car and drive all over the UK.”

Andy also spoke of his experience. He said: “Like Kris, I struggled to adapt during the first UK lockdown. It was the first-time ever that I’d had to work from home and it took me a while to find the perfect workspace; I tried the kitchen, living room and home office.

“I felt more settled during the second lockdown. The buzz of the office is great and I am enjoying being back in the Axess Systems office but I do like the new approach to working. And, using Citrix at home, means that we can tell our clients that we too use the system to continue to run our business effectively.”

## Why Citrix?

Software giants Citrix specialise in server, application and desktop virtualisation and cloud computing technologies. Their applications enable staff to work from anywhere, on any device and on any network.

Trusted by millions around the world, Axess Systems are Citrix Gold Solution Advisors, meaning that they have built a core business offering on virtualisation, networking and/or cloud and have demonstrated expertise on Citrix products to deliver a set of solutions to customers.

About First Response Finance: Founded in 1998, First Response Finance are proud winners of the Feefo Platinum Trusted Service Award for customer reviews, having been

awarded this prestigious accolade for two successive years, in 2020 and 2021.

Part of a large international organisation, Itochu Corporation; a company famed for brands such as Kwik Fit and Stapletons Tyres, First Response Finance placed 18th in the Sunday Times Top 100 Best Mid-companies to work for in 2019.

Their entire staff worked successfully from home for nine months during the coronavirus pandemic.

## About Axess Systems:

Axess Systems delivers its services to various organisations across the UK, including health and housing trusts, local government,

manufacturers and finance companies.

In addition to providing IT consultancy and support services, Axess Systems also provide managed cloud services and are certified to ISO27001:2013.

Founded by managing director Ed Morton 20 years ago, Axess Systems has its head office in Denby and a regional office in Southampton.

It is one of only 11 UK firms to have achieved the coveted Gold Citrix Solution Advisor level with specialism in virtualisation and has recently become one of only three businesses in the country enrolled on to the Citrix Customer Success Management programme. Axess Systems are also a Dell EMC Gold Partner, a Veeam Silver Partner and a Microsoft Partner.