

DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCY: Indigo Tree gains security certification

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Key facts

SECTOR: Digital marketing

CLIENT: Indigo Tree agency

LOCATION: Berkhamsted

BRIEF: To enable Indigo Tree to gain the national cyber security certificate, Cyber Essentials

For any established digital marketing agency, handling confidential data such as clients' passwords and e-commerce websites is fraught with risk if cyber security is not up-to-date at the highest level – particularly if you want to maintain or build long-standing relationships with customers.

At Indigo Tree, based in Hertfordshire, all services were online. To raise its profile as a hands-on, state-of-the-art agency, the agency wanted to show both customers and the market that it was as cyber-safe as it could be. *"If clients aren't happy or lose trust in you as a supplier, they'll just go elsewhere,"* says Indigo Tree's director, Louise Towler.

A chance meeting with Assign-IT's commercial director, Dave Privett, at a networking event convinced her that gaining cyber-security certification through the fledgling, government-backed Cyber Essentials scheme – for which Assign-IT is an certification body – would give her agency a vital marketing edge, particularly in view of its work in e-commerce and personal data processing.

A security certification specially designed for SMEs

"We liked the fact that Assign-IT was a consultant/supplier that would independently assess our IT and suggest remedial action without compromising our size, needs and client base," says Louise.

The agency had a wide portfolio to cover – website builds, website maintenance, hosting, video production, email campaigns and a range of SEO initiatives says Dave.

He explained that the government-backed certification was specifically designed for the SME market and, once achieved, would assure both the agency and its customers that measures were in place to protect client information, control access to a client's IT system and ensure all software updates were implemented and maintained.

How to make the Android Devices compliant

How did Assign-IT guide the agency through the certification process? *"The key was helping us understand the scope of the standards,"* says Louise. As a digital agency, Indigo Tree undertook all the technical on-site compliance work itself with advice from Assign-IT via phone or email.

"We had to set up standard accounts and make sure that people were logging on via the right account, that the network was made secure and anti-virus software was added to various devices."

The real benefit from working with Assign-IT was interpretation of the standard, says Louise. *"For instance, you're not supposed to link up devices to your network without them being secure."*

“My developers use Android phones to test websites and listen to Spotify. Android is not secure so Assign-IT suggested we buy an Android anti-virus program to prevent issues. Now they are allowed to connect up their Android phones but only if they are running the anti-virus software.”

Certification strengthens productivity

Another important factor for Louise was maintaining productivity while enhancing security. Her website developers, for instance, sometimes needed to download software to help with the development of a new website. Unacceptable production delays could have been caused by staff having to wait for Louise’s sign-off before downloading any software – a precaution against hackers tricking staff into downloading a virus instead of software.

But Assign-IT worked with Louise on how to avoid this and yet still meet certification requirements. Now, the developers have a list of core applications and the websites from which they can download them at any time. Louise needs to sign off anything else.

She also singles out the company’s help in filling out the self-assessment form that must be submitted before certification. “They definitely held our hand through the process and helped us pass first time.”

Assign-IT kept Louise and her staff fully briefed of all necessary changes, ensuring everyone was on board and building awareness within the team about the new ways of working.

Free cyber liability insurance

Gaining the certification through Assign-IT also earned Indigo Tree the bonus of free cyber liability insurance from AIG worth up to £25,000 in indemnity cover – an added extra that is offered to all Cyber Essentials achievers.

The completed certification has already influenced sales strategy. “We mention the certification in all our bidding proposals and it’s a real point of difference compared with our competitors – not many have this system in our industry and it will definitely help us when bidding for new work.

‘Client reaction has been very positive’

“It’s in our clients’ interest to work with companies that have at least the basic level of cyber security protection in place,” says Louise. “We can now actually prove on paper we are a company they can do business with.

“Client reaction has been very positive and – equally important – we’ve been attending new business meetings off the back of it. I’d definitely go back to Assign-IT again – they made the process simple and did a good job!”