

Kent Science Park Sota Solutions

Domenico Simone, Marketing Assistant at Sota, introduces us to the company, its long-standing history and the advantages of being a tenant at Kent Science Park.

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Can you start by telling us all about Sota?

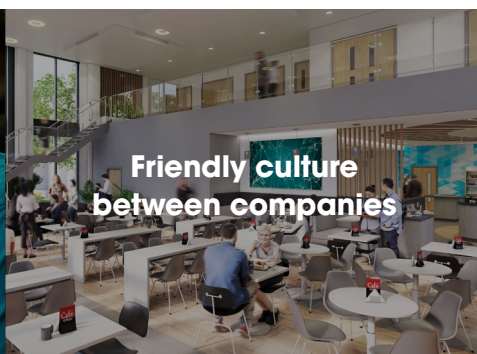
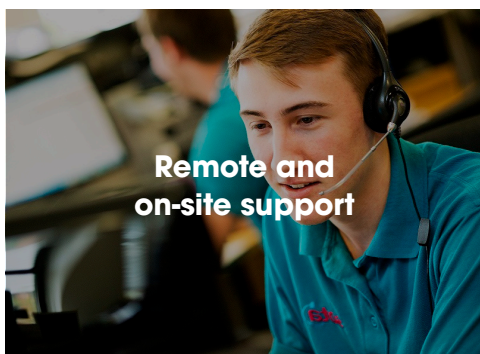
Sota is a specialist supplier of IT solutions, support and managed services, including its own fibre-optic network, two data centres, a disaster recovery centre and, most recently, a cloud platform. The company was initially established in 1989 as a father-and-son business reselling accounts software, and it has grown and expanded its remit, managing contracts in excess of £10 million with a client base of over 300 businesses, while still retaining a small workforce of around 50 employees.

How did the company grow and end up in its current situation?

For the first 10 years, Sota was merely selling software. It wasn't until 1998 that the company decided to invest in its own fibre-optic connectivity, extending around Kent and into London, making it one of the earliest internet service providers in the region. The Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) kicked off around 2000, and Sota acquired telephony capabilities which were integrated into its core service. As computer information technology continued to explode, the management decided to go down the path of buying and developing its own infrastructure, which was a significant change of direction for the company.

And this was around the same time that you moved to Kent Science Park?

Yes, we relocated in 2004, and our new premises allowed us to build our first data centre, Datacentre F25, closely followed by a second larger data centre with enterprise grade facilities. In 2007, our Chairman, Paul Cowham, won Entrepreneur of the Year and we continued to invest heavily in our infrastructure, creating a disaster recovery suite with dual PCs and desktops – which can accommodate a 100-strong workforce – in 2008, and launching our own cloud platform in 2013. We do everything across the board, from security back-up to telephony, with a team of 30 to 40 engineers offering both remote and on-site support.



What are the benefits of being at Kent Science Park?

Security is the top priority for any IT company handling confidential client data, and our facilities are a real selling point to our customers, helping to set us apart from our competitors. We're fortunate to benefit from 24/7, vigilant, on-site security, including CCTV and COTAG identification for our data centres and offices. Prospective clients can see where their data will be securely stored, and the fact that we operate everything internally is a key advantage; if a problem arises, we don't have to chase a third party to help identify the problem – it really gives our customers peace of mind. We act as a single point of contact, which is probably why we've been around for so long and continue to grow. A second benefit is the geographical location; the majority of our customers are in the south east of England, but being close to the capital has also meant that we've been able to support London-based companies and develop partnerships with similar organisations, particularly in the area of workplace recovery.



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Aside from your own facilities, what's the park like as a whole?

Kent Science Park is a great location, and the management looks after the site really well. For example, there is a new cafeteria, and there's lovely parkland and a Japanese garden to walk around, even with the heightened security! There's a friendly culture between companies, and it's great to be able to attend hosted coffee mornings where we can catch up with local businesses and find out what's new. Given our close proximity, it's not a surprise that many of the companies on site are actually now clients as well. We can provide services at an extremely competitive rate thanks to the site infrastructure, and it's convenient for them to have their IT support just around the corner, which has obviously helped to build close relationships across the park.

So what's next for Sota?

Our priority is to continue improving our in-house provision, which will involve further recruitment and maybe even expanding our office footprint. The company continues to remain at the forefront of IT security; maintaining ISO 27001 accreditation and following information security best practice are important steps over the next couple of years, as well as seeking further opportunities in London. We've recently entered into a partnership with a workplace recovery company, and we're developing a new service delivery matrix to continue to compete in the market. The future looks promising and we're keen to leverage our knowledge, experience and infrastructure to support our clients in the best way possible, picking up some new customers along the way!



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To learn more about Sota Solutions, visit www.sota.co.uk.

To find out more about the facilities and opportunities at Kent Science Park, visit

www.kentsciencepark.com.

