

Keeping remote workers operational in a crisis

UK charity Versus Arthritis sets up a self-service portal for ordering IT equipment with Dell Premier Solutions



Charities, Nonprofit | UK

Business needs

Versus Arthritis sent all 400 employees home to work when the COVID-19 lockdown was announced in March 2020. While the charity already had flexible working arrangements in place, staff required additional technology to ensure the effectiveness and connectivity of their home office arrangements. Versus Arthritis needed to enable staff to order equipment direct to their homes rather than to its closed offices.

Solutions at a glance

- [Dell Premier Solutions](#)
- [Dell XPS laptops](#)
- [Dell monitors](#)
- [Dell Universal Dock D6000](#)
- [Dell wireless keyboards and mice](#)

Business results

- Support for employees during the COVID-19 crisis
- Solutions delivered in 48–72 hours
- Thousands of pounds saved in shipping costs
- Efficient invoicing system

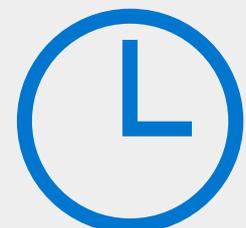
High

level of staff engagement with the portal



Many

hours saved for the IT team





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Chris Blake, Head of ICT, Versus Arthritis

Versus Arthritis was formed in 2018 following the merger of Arthritis Care and Arthritis Research UK. The charity speaks for the 18.8 million people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions and is the largest funder of arthritis research in the country. It works alongside people with arthritis, researchers, healthcare professionals and campaigners to challenge misconceptions and ensure that arthritis is recognised as a priority in the UK.

Following government guidelines during the COVID-19 crisis, Versus Arthritis shut its offices and needed to supply technology to employees working from home. Chris Blake, head of ICT at Versus Arthritis, says, “The disruption caused by the lockdown put immense pressure on our finance and procurement teams. We wanted a simple solution that would avoid the IT team having to take delivery of equipment and reship it to colleagues’ homes.”

A creative approach to specific requirements

The charity considered a number of different options, including eCommerce sites, before asking its account team at Dell Technologies to propose a solution. Versus Arthritis had worked with Dell since the late 1990s and equipped its staff with lightweight Dell XPS laptops. Staff used the laptops to work from home and, when in the office, they also connected the machines to desks, equipped with docks, monitors, keyboards and mice.

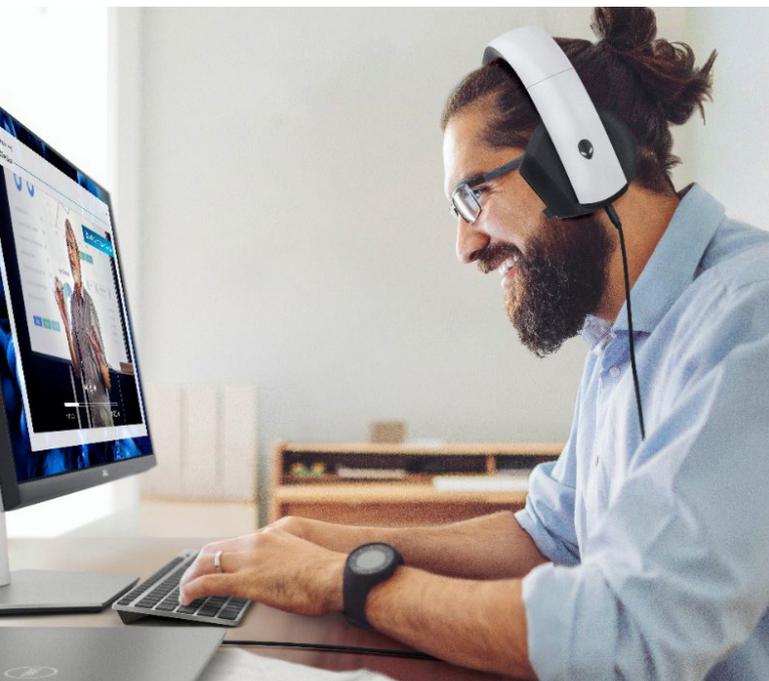
“Some of our staff have arthritis themselves so we choose lightweight, high-performance laptops,” explains Blake. “We wanted to continue this supportive approach. We didn’t want people cramped over their laptops or struggling to connect.”

The Dell Technologies account team consulted internal eCommerce experts and proposed a customised version of its Dell Premier Solutions procurement portal. This solution is used by internal IT or procurement teams to order products from the Dell Technologies online catalogue.

The charity looked for two important features from the proposed portal: a limited display of products to make the selection process easier and deliveries to employee homes rather than to the business address. As part of the process, the IT team would need to check and approve all orders as well as monitor for errors to keep expenditure under control.

Fast-track customisation and deployment

Versus Arthritis chose Dell Technologies to provide a solution because it met all the charity's specifications and could deliver a portal quickly to satisfy 400 employees' urgent needs. "Like everyone else, we've had to make some adjustments to how we work," says Blake. "Getting people the kit they needed so our organisation could run effectively was really important.



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The portal took just days to customise and launch. In consultation with the charity, Dell Technologies developed a modified version of the Premier portal with a limited range of products. These included Dell 24 USB-C monitors, wireless keyboards and mice, Universal Dock D6000 docking stations and laptops.

The USB-C monitors have the benefit of a single cable delivering power, video and data, helping to reduce cable clutter on users' desks. USB-C ports also save users time and effort when connecting and disconnecting their notebooks to monitors and other peripherals. "We already knew the combinations of Dell Technologies products that worked well, so we were in a good position to specify which ones to include in the portal," says Blake.

A simple ordering process

To order IT, employees log in to the portal using a two-factor authentication and password, select the products they need and enter the address where the delivery should go. Users have the option to consult remotely with the IT team if they are not sure which products to choose or how to set them up.

On the first day of operation the IT team checked and approved nearly 70 orders. In most cases equipment was delivered in 48–72 hours, compared with the 8–9 days it could have taken if bulk orders had been delivered to the head office and redirected to peoples' homes. The system feeds individual invoices into the charity's finance system, simplifying the ordering process further.

“As an arthritis charity we want to be champions of musculoskeletal health in the workplace, so it's been vital that we provide our people with equipment that allows them to work safely from home,” says Blake. “The portal has streamlined the IT selection process, taking pressure off finance and procurement teams and enabling staff to continue their important work.”

Significant cost savings

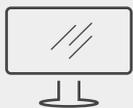
Versus Arthritis has saved thousands of pounds in shipping costs thanks to the fast and safe delivery of equipment. Employee feedback has been highly positive, and the charity aims to continue using the portal while office-based working remains disrupted by the pandemic.

“We’re planning to employ more staff and volunteers, but with uncertainty in the short- to medium-term outlook for office-based working, it makes sense to continue using the portal,” says Blake. “To anyone thinking of adopting a similar solution, I’d say just do it. We’ve saved so much time and effort with the portal. It’s a no-brainer for anyone who needs to provide a self-service IT procurement system.”



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