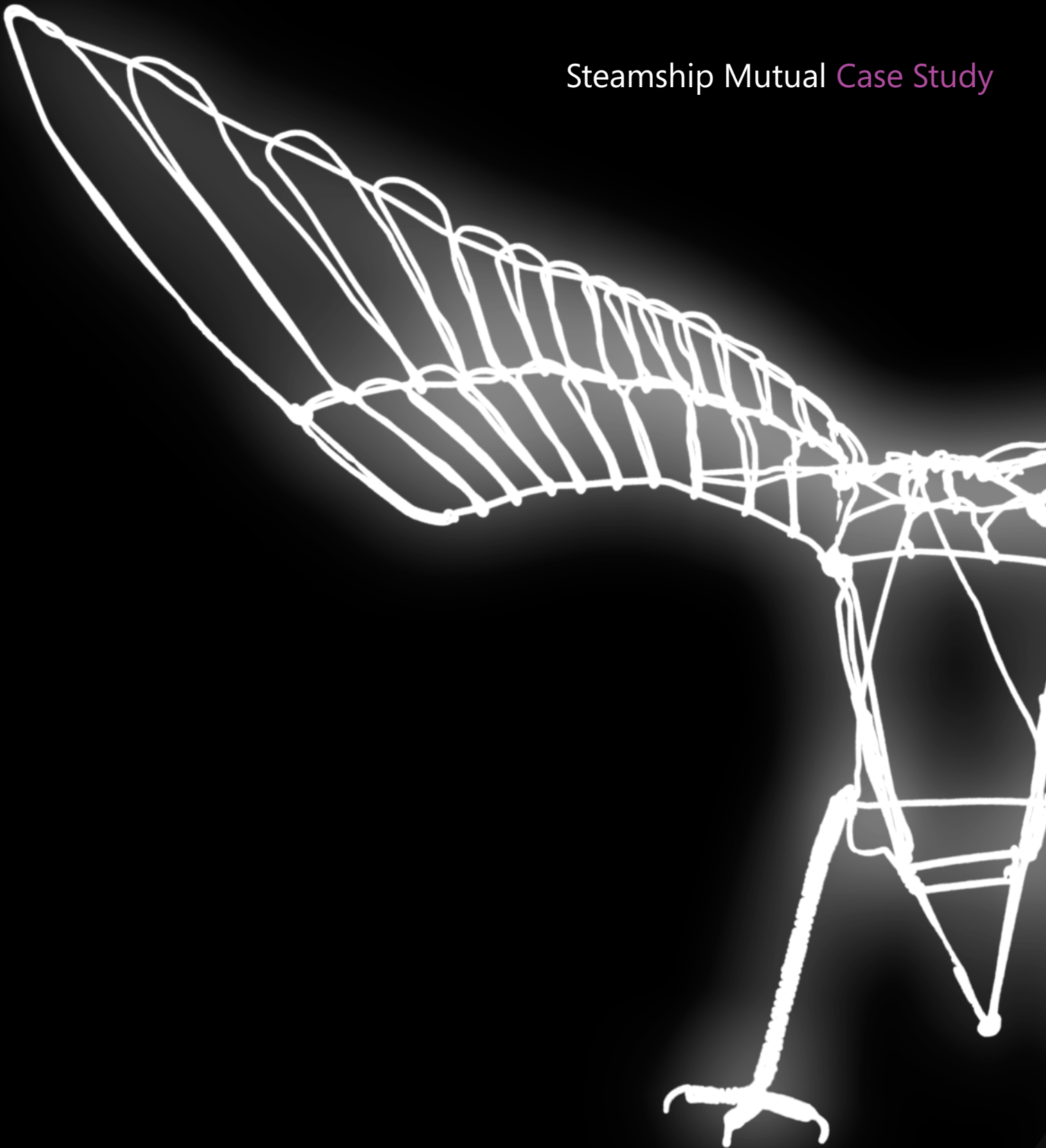




WIREBIRD

Steamship Mutual Case Study



Steamship Mutual Outsourcing:

Steamship Mutual is a specialist marine underwriter providing Protection and Indemnity (P&I) insurance to the world's shipping organizations. It provides insurance cover for ship owners and charterers for the legal liabilities they may incur in connection with the operation of their vessels.

Steamship Mutual is one of 13 P&I organizations that underwrite approximately 90% of the world's merchant tonnage. The handling of claims represents a significant proportion of the daily work undertaken by the Company. Effective and professional claims management and advice is essential if claims are to be either avoided or contained.

Steamship Mutual operates an international business and vessel incidents can occur at any time and anywhere. Because of this, the need for Steamship Mutual to have reliable and fast communications and access to information systems in place is paramount.

In 2005 Steamship Mutual made the decision to outsource its network and communications management and support. Given the critical nature of these services to Steamship this was a major commitment for the company.

Steamship Mutual staff now expect to have 24/7 access to email services and business systems. "Given the way that technology has evolved, there is quite rightly an expectancy among our members that we will be on hand immediately to assist them," says Danny McDaid, IT Director for Steamship Mutual.

And with technology now capable of supporting the delivery of high bandwidth communications, there is an increasing business need for Steamship Mutual staff to access the company's systems to view information remotely. With such a critical 24/7 operation in place, Steamship Mutual must have a fixed and mobile network infrastructure that's resilient, has the highest possible availability and provide acceptable response times.



Claims vary in their size and complexity from relatively minor damage to a vessel to major incidents that make international headlines. Major incidents require coordination with many involved bodies such as port authorities, Governments emergency services, conservation bodies and local industries as well as the vessel owner or charterer.

From the vessel owner's or charterer's perspective vessels that are unable to trade due to an incident are effectively loss making, the ability of Steamship Mutual to enable vessels to become operational as quickly as possible is a major part of the services they supply.



STEAMSHIP MUTUAL

The Wirebird Effect

Danny and his in-house team of software developers, project leaders and database administrators achieve this with the support of City of London based IT Services provider, Wirebird.

Since its formation in 1998, Wirebird has developed a strong reputation for delivering flexible, professional and trustworthy services to clients such as Steamship Mutual, the British Retail Consortium and John Laing. The company provides a range of services, including IT support, managed services and outsourcing.

"We outsource our network operation to Wirebird for a variety of very good reasons," says Danny. "Our voice and data network is critical to our business, but are seen as tools to enable us to undertake our business. It made sense to have a specialist IT consultancy such as Wirebird involved where we can draw upon their experience and skills, as well as the flexibility they can offer."

"I no longer have to worry about upsizing or downsizing within my development team," says Danny. "If I need additional support or consultancy I only have to make a request to Wirebird. The relationship also means that we no longer incur expenses for network and communications support in areas such as staff recruitment, training and development as Wirebird ensures that its team is completely up to date with communications and technical developments."

"We outsource our network operation to Wirebird for a variety of very good reasons"

An additional advantage for Steamship Mutual is that Wirebird works with other companies and organisations in other sectors and can therefore bring the benefit of that wider experience to Steamship Mutual. "They often share with us their experience of trying out new technologies with other clients," explains Danny. "Communications technology is forever advancing so it's beneficial for us to know what would work well for us and what would not.

The business demands on IT services are growing in many areas, increased mobile communication, improved system resilience and availability are demands that have resulted in significant investments in server virtualisation and storage facilities. The knowledge we gained from working with Wirebird in these areas has been, and continues to be invaluable. Had we not outsourced to Wirebird our ability to take these technologies independently would have to be questioned. Wirebird brought their expertise to our projects providing significant time and cost savings. "

Given the sensitive nature of Steamship Mutual's business, it has also been important for Danny to trust Wirebird with more than just their network expertise.

"Although we're talking about technology, we are also very much a people business," explains Danny. "One of the great aspects of Wirebird's support is its team of network engineers. They are frequently dealing with our staff at a very high level and so need to inspire confidence. That they have an excellent understanding of our issues and priorities which is important for us."

"They are also pleasantly proactive. Wirebird don't simply provide the day to day management and support of the network. They will often come to us with suggestions and ideas that could improve the services IT provide to the business. This comes out of a good understanding of our infrastructure and the priorities staff have in using it. Such a service is of great value to us and adds to the feeling the both the Steamship Mutual and Wirebird teams are working toward the same aims".

"As well as providing our staff with greater mobility and flexibility in their working patterns, our aim is to develop the network so that it suits the needs of our business and people," explains Danny.

"Our network infrastructure has changed significantly since we hired Wirebird in 2005 and will no doubt continue to do so as more demands are made upon it. Given their expertise, Wirebird have an important role to play in this development, helping us to understand the needs of the network as they relate to bandwidth, resilience and security. Our track record of working with them gives us every confidence that they are the right people to take our network forward."



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