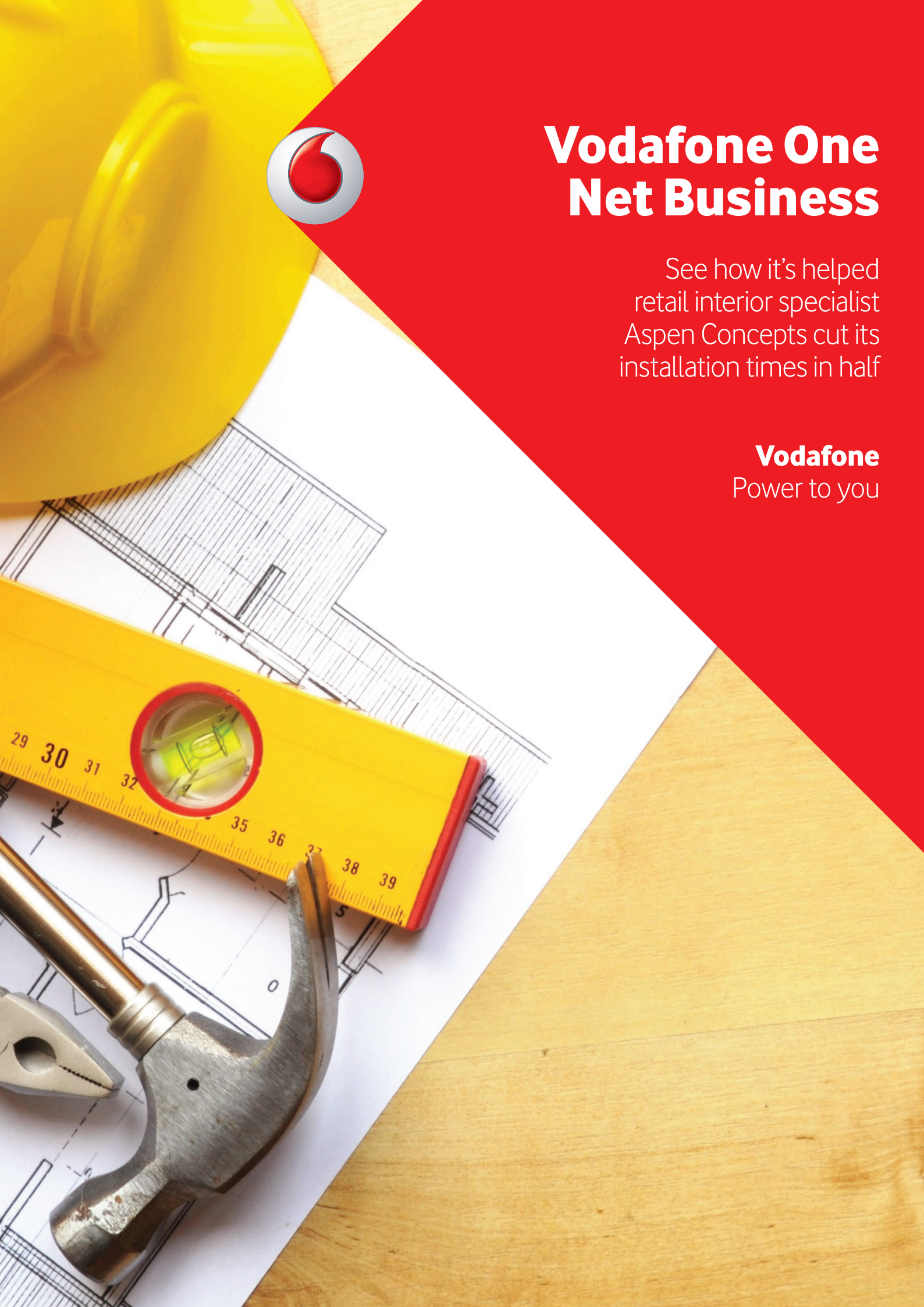




Vodafone One Net Business

See how it's helped
retail interior specialist
Aspen Concepts cut its
installation times in half

Vodafone
Power to you



Cloud connectivity creates collaboration platform, and keeps Aspen mobile

The office, everywhere

Richard Smith lives an hour away from his office, two hours away from his company's nearest manufacturing site in Birmingham. What's more, around half of his 80-employees are on the road and offsite at any one time. The business undertakes around 7,500 customer installations each year.

"My office is mobile," he says. It has to be.

Closer customer engagement

Aspen Concepts is a shop fitting and joinery service specialising in the retail sector. Founded through a management buyout in 2007, the company has three sites across the UK – Birmingham, Swindon and Durham. Richard Smith, part of the original buyout team and now managing director, says his ambition was to build a financially secure business with sensible growth and rewarding careers for staff. "Achieve that and the profits will come."

Being able to better manage his time, and see more of his family, remains a key driver. "You realise time is more valuable than money. Being able to work effectively, to choose when I start work or end the day, means I see more of my kids."

His wife, a director in the business, is often sat alongside, working from the kitchen table.

In terms of strategy, the plan is to focus on closer customer engagement.

"The best way for us to grow the business is to be out and about, face to face with customers, presenting our services," he says. "We want to win business with larger customers, and that requires far more relationship building. We can't afford to be office-bound."

The strategy, he says, is to form closer working relationships with larger customers. This will shift the workflow from a project to project basis to more long term, ongoing engagement.

With the business split across the three sites, each with its own mobile contracts, and business development and project management staff encouraged to be offsite; Aspen needed to consolidate its communications estate. Consolidation would not only reduce costs, but provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the company's communication. Richard wanted a communications provider that could advise the business and provide a roadmap for future technology.

An existing Vodafone customer, Richard opted for Vodafone One Net Business. This cloud-based solution would connect Aspen's mobile and fixed phones, across all sites, providing a common voicemail function. Aspen staff can now be contacted on one number, through mobile or desk phones. Vodafone One Net also enables Aspen to set up 'hunt groups', so calls can be answered should a colleague be busy.

“Mobility makes for more productive workers. It’s common for us to be on a conference call with the factory in Birmingham, the office in Swindon, crews on the road... all discussing the fit-out of a supermarket in London. We’re a business operating across the UK, but that doesn’t mean we need offices across the UK.”

Richard Smith, Managing Director, Aspen Concepts

Encouraging collaboration

“One Net means I can have effective conference calls with my management team, regardless of location,” says Richard, who now has the flexibility to work from home. “I tend to have a daily catch-up whenever I’m driving into the office. We can share drawing plans or photo updates of a particular project, quickly and simply. Email is great, but I emphasise to all staff that we need to pick up the phone and talk to one another.”

Being able to share information and speak to managers onsite is helping Aspen win more business. “We’ve won a major new piece of business with an existing customer. It will mean putting 30 teams on the road, all with smartphones and tablets. It will see us launch a new project management tool, with orders, emails and sign-offs all managed through a tablet,” explains Richard.

It means staff will be able to share real-time updates, revised drawings and project progress with customers, and head office, from anywhere. The solution will mesh data inputted onsite – photos, signatures, updates to customer information – with a centralised database, removing the need to input by hand and providing a real-time view of projects.

“Faster turnarounds and clearer customer engagement are crucial for our continued growth,” says Richard. “Customers demand faster lead times. Vodafone helps us meet these expectations.”

Richard says mobile working is the future of his business. “Mobility makes for more productive workers. It’s common for us to be on a conference call with the factory in Birmingham, the office in Swindon, crews on the road... all discussing the fit-out of a supermarket in London. We’re a business operating across the UK, but that doesn’t mean we need offices across the UK.”

Significant benefits

- Reduced communications costs and account management complexity by consolidating mobile and desktop contracts across three locations
- Improved employee productivity through the creation of a single contact number for fixed and mobile calls, and central voicemail function
- Enabled project managers to be offsite with customers, more of the time.

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