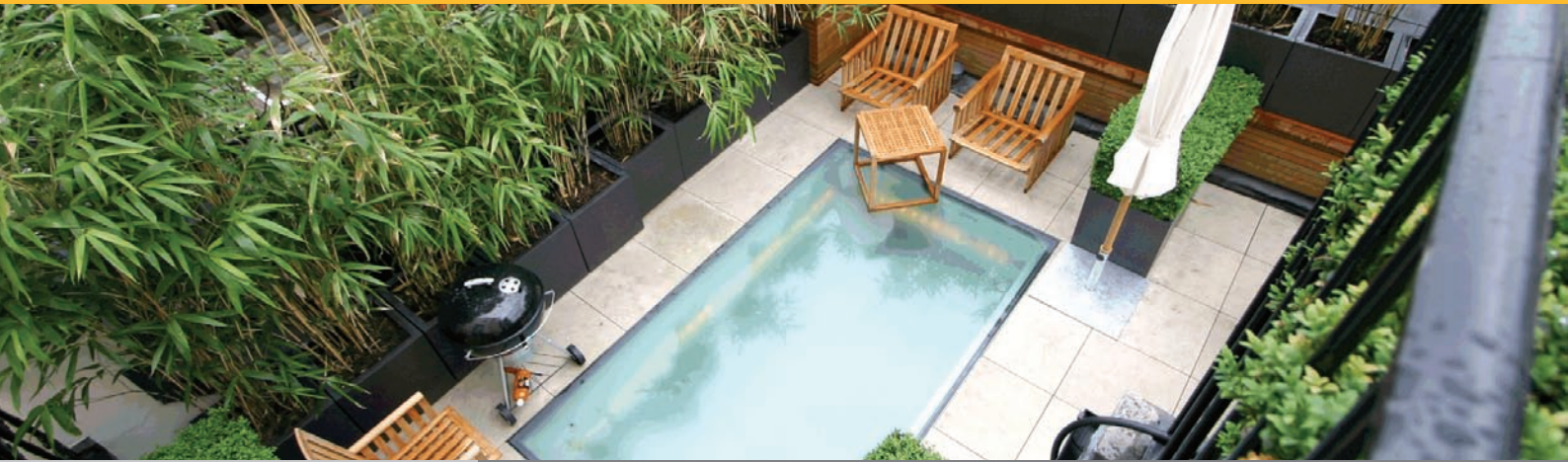


# case study:

Trevor Lahiff Architects use Workspace™ to bridge gap between London and Nepal offices.



TREVOR | LAHIFF ARCHITECTS

## About Trevor Lahiff Architects (TLA)

Based in London, TLA is a 20-person architectural practice, specialising in high-end residential new build and refurbishment projects. TLA is a small but diverse business, with offices in Nepal and outsourcing partners in India. The practice specialises in high end residential work for a range of international private clients.

## the need for change:

TLA were experiencing the kind of problems that any small but growing business can identify with. An Exchange Server and Outlook was being used as the main storage and data management system for managing project data. Although TLA had good filing systems in place, this was not ideal as it became clear that it was not suited to a project environment, nor was it scalable if they wanted to expand. TLA's QA system also dictated that documents should be retained for a minimum of 7 years; without a centralised system for storing and archiving all the practice's data and documents it seemed inevitable that the process of printing out all project documentation would continue. Keeping paper copies of documents was a laborious and time-consuming process which, on reflection, seemed pointless. This, combined with the need for frequent information sharing with the Nepal office, meant that TLA's email systems were under extreme pressure.

What the practice actually needed was a system that would fulfil all of its data management requirements, including contact management, document management and control, company intranet, timesheets and resources. The system also needed to act as an archiving facility and, just for good measure, to provide extranet facilities for sharing information and drawings with Nepal and India.

Some people in the office, including the Directors, were not convinced that a 20-person practice had a need for an all-encompassing system. Associate Karen Walton, who had always taken a keen interest in IT systems, had to convince them that they would be facing a crisis if they did nothing: "Even though we are fairly small, we deal with a large amount of documentation. Everything has to be kept so it was inevitable that we would soon be in a situation where we would not have been able to cope."

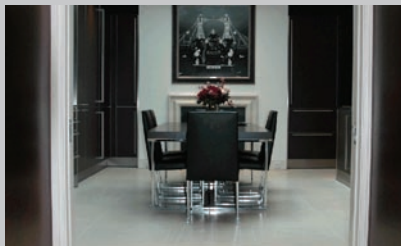
Walton began looking at various systems, which were specifically designed for architects, to take control of the issues surrounding document processes. Walton comments: "With these systems, all we would have achieved is the introduction of yet another database – nothing I saw was all-encompassing. When I saw **Workspace™** it ticked the vast majority of boxes for me, and after meeting the Union Square team, I knew that we could work together to successfully configure the system for the areas that **Workspace™** didn't cover."



"Union Square are large enough to offer a comprehensive support network and small enough to offer a personal service"



“**Workspace™** is helping us to become more streamlined and increase profitability”



“**Workspace™** has vastly improved communication between the two offices”



For more information about **Workspace™**

Union Square Software Ltd  
The Triangle  
Nottingham  
NG2 1AE

T: +44 (0)115 985 0055  
E: [enquiries@unionsquaresoftware.com](mailto:enquiries@unionsquaresoftware.com)

## the decision:

Choosing the right IT partner was an important factor for TLA. Walton explains: “As a small business we don’t have extensive IT skills in house so we needed to know that we would be adequately backed up. We have worked with one-man bands in the past where there was no support at all and with larger IT companies the support can be faceless and impersonal. Union Square are large enough to offer a comprehensive support network and small enough to offer a personal service.”

The cost of an all-encompassing IT solution can be off-putting for some, however TLA opted for a rental programme, which kept the costs down to not much more than their existing timesheets system. Walton felt that **Workspace™** would pay for itself by helping TLA to become more streamlined and increase profitability: “While we are not growing in terms of employee numbers, there is opportunity for us to increase turnover with our current resource levels by operating in a more efficient manner, and **Workspace™** is helping us to achieve this goal.”

## implementation:

TLA opted for a two-phase implementation plan. Initially a pilot project was run on **Workspace™** for all contacts, emails and document control for a handful of projects. After two months, all new projects were run on **Workspace™**, at which point the old ways of working were removed. Timesheets and leave were gradually incorporated and the Nepal office was brought on board. After a further month, external partners were granted rights for accessing project information through the Extranet facilities. Training was delivered by Union Square who ran courses over two days in TLA’s office: “This really helped everyone in the office to understand how to use **Workspace™** correctly,” comments Walton.

The next step will be granting access to external consultants. “We generally always use the same consultants,” says Walton, “so it makes sense for them to have access to **Workspace™** as well.” TLA are currently working on archiving all completed projects onto **Workspace™**. Once this is done they will dispose of the majority of hard copy documentation.

## complete integration:

Bridging the gap between London and Nepal may seem like a tough challenge but it is one that **Workspace™** is helping to achieve. At the TLA satellite office in Nepal, the staff produce drawings for projects back in the UK. **Workspace™** has made the continual exchange of information between the two offices simpler and reduced the strain on the server. “We can just send links to documents now rather than sending an attachment every time,” comments Walton. The Nepal staff can also view projects and all related contacts and documents so that they are more aware of a project’s status and nature. Walton adds: “Having **Workspace™** has vastly improved communication between the two offices.”

## the future:

Now that the core of the system is up and running, Walton is turning her attention to some of the bespoke work she originally wanted. “At the minute we are still creating minutes of our meetings and then publishing them, but there is an opportunity to be using **Workspace™** to automatically create these documents.” TLA are also keen to get work-in-progress drawings onto **Workspace™**. “Once they are in, there will be no need for people to store anything on the file server,” comments Walton.

## the impact:

The TLA implementation has demonstrated how **Workspace™** can help smaller practices to pull together their operations, increase efficiency and even affect the bottom line. Walton concludes: “Having **Workspace™** puts us ahead of the competition and in a strong position to enter new markets and take on competition work in new sectors.”

[www.unionsquaresoftware.com](http://www.unionsquaresoftware.com)