



What can a manufacturer of interior products teach you about the future of work?

The digital transformation of



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# Game Changers



## SAS International IT Leader: A Game Changer that Has Carte Blanche to Replace Systems, Change Work Styles

SAS International is celebrating its 50-year anniversary in 2018, but the company is devoting more of its energies positioning for the future than looking back at its past.

SAS International supplies state-of-the-art ceilings, bespoke architectural metalwork, and lighting systems for some of the most futuristic buildings in the world. The company has equipped hundreds of large buildings over the years across Europe and Asia, including airport terminals in London and across the globe, a Google complex in Dublin, and the London Bloomberg headquarters which opened in October 2017. The new Bloomberg building, for instance, has environmentally-friendly ceilings featuring 2.5 million polished aluminum petals that reflect light, sound baffles that soothe interior work settings, and coolers that are chilled and heated by water from above.



“It’s been called the most efficient building in Europe. And we’re right in the middle of it.”

### From Futuristic Buildings to a Futuristic Way of Working

SAS is also extending its look-ahead strategy to internal practices—creating a plan to change the way employees work.

“People have worked how they’ve worked for years because they were using the tools they had,” Greene said. “But now we have a lot of different ways of working. We’re going to look at each team and department internally. See how they’re working, see how we can bring in modern tools to see how we can work together.”

“It was an incredible challenge because what they were looking at was a complete overhaul,” Greene, who joined SAS as Group IT Manager, recalled. “We had carte blanche to replace everything in terms of infrastructure, applications, and hardware. I approached it with a cloud-first strategy, with a focus on getting value from the new investments and bringing in modern technology to create different ways to work.”

Two and a half years into a three-year transformation project, Greene is excited about the changes SAS has made and optimistic about plans for future innovations. He and his six colleagues in IT revamped the technology platforms that serve 600 IT users in a company of 900, and now the team is focused on creating new ways for employees to work.

“The biggest issue we had to deal with was uptime and performance,” Greene recalled. “Systems were regularly going offline and not performing. It was causing supreme bottlenecks in the processes.”



## Connecting Offices Across Oceans

Collaboration is important to SAS. Drawings and other work documents are shared regularly between the Reading home office near London, SAS's three factories in Wales, Scotland, and England, and four satellite offices in Dubai, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Australia. But, with phone systems going down and servers unable to scale with the business, Greene knew he had to rebuild the IT infrastructure quickly.

He replaced the company's network with a managed cloud-based network. He moved most data held by SAS International to a hybrid cloud storage platform that snapshots data every two to five minutes and allows for easy restoration of files. He moved the company's email and business applications to the cloud, with Microsoft Office 365 and a private cloud initiative for the company's ERP platform and applications. The company replaced its phone systems with a unified communications system from Fuze which centralizes phone, email, messaging, and other collaborative processes on one platform. All of these moves solidified the basic infrastructure.

## A New Flexible Way of Working

Next, the team moved to a more complicated task: changing the way the organization worked. Rather than fall back on processes of the past, Greene and his team embraced the innovative culture of the business and the passion of the cutting edge design teams. "We've replaced the failing systems with something that's state of the art. Now we have to try to get the full value out of what we've created," Greene said. "The next stage is the biggest stage, which is an end-to-end review of how people work."

Greene equipped executives, design, and sales teams at every site with Microsoft Surface tablets and Surface Hub devices, both with high-speed video connections and touch-screen technology. This enabled them to share documents more readily, iterate on changes, and hold more productive meetings from long distances.

SAS is using Fuze to support its mobile workforce by providing the same communication features and experience regardless of where workers are and what devices they're using. The company's number of mobile workers has grown by 25 percent over the past two years and is expected to increase further with the introduction of the new platform.

"We still pretty much have everyone on site, except for our sales and some project teams, but we are looking at making work more flexible for all," Greene said. "We've enabled that change. We're going to invest time in how we would achieve that for an organization that's historically very set in the way it works. Culturally it would be a quite a change to allow people to work from home and remotely, and that's something we're going to look at this year."



Greene has several data-related projects on tap for the next year, as well. He's working with teams to leverage the analytics from the Fuze system to do a better job tracking and routing calls using Microsoft's PowerBI platform. He's also looking at purchasing a CRM system to funnel the vast amounts of data in the organization, from Fuze and other applications, into customer service functions. "Data," Greene said, "is going to be huge for us next year."

So will the Internet of Things. Greene said he's working with R&D teams to enable IoT-related processes to make factories "smarter." That, he said, can involve automating paper processes, flagging managers when machines need maintenance, and integrating sensor technologies to create "smart ceilings." The latter is an exciting design challenge in the era of smart building technology and what Greene sees as the technology of the future.



"We're looking at doing a lot of work with where people are, what they're doing, how to service them better," he said. "It's incredibly exciting. I'm a huge techie anyway, so that's one of the areas I'd like to dedicate a lot of my time next year—get involved in the R&D side of the business."



**NAME:**  
James Greene

**COMPANY:**  
SAS International

**TITLE:**  
Group IT Manager

**PREVIOUS GIGS:**  
Senior Systems Analyst at Kemp Little LLP  
and Fabric technologies

**INDUSTRY:**  
Manufacturing

**EMPLOYEE COUNT:**  
900

**HOW HE CHANGED THE GAME:**  
Executing a complete overhaul of IT functions, using a cloud-first strategy to eliminate system downtime and enable more flexible ways to work.

Visionary leaders are changing the game for the modern workforce.

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