

CASE STUDY:

All Metal Services

Design and implementation of WAN



The Client

All Metal Services (AMS) is one of the world's leading suppliers of raw materials and services to the Aerospace and Defence Industries. It offers a variety of Fabrication Services and Total Material Management Solutions to its worldwide customer base.

AMS have seven warehouses that are strategically located to allow them to offer an enviable nationwide delivery service. They cut, machine, protect and package a wide variety of items from stock, and deliver on a 'just-in-time' basis. They have worldwide revenues approaching \$400 million and current stocks in excess of \$120 million.

MNI Services is an All Metal Services IT partner and has supported the AMS information network for many years along with providing hardware services, support and communications. They have also developed bespoke accounts and inventory control systems.

The Situation



AMS Wide Area Network is made up of seven sites: Birmingham, Belfast, West Drayton, Bristol, Bolton and France, and has more than 150 network users. They use an IBM AS/400 iSeries system at the Birmingham site with Windows servers at each branch. Network traffic to, from and through Birmingham on a daily basis, meant the network had to be strong and secure, and also able to accommodate ever-increasing network usage.

MNI Services identified that AMS were already paying a considerable amount for their rental of Frame Relay connections, and had they needed to increase bandwidth capacity, Frame Relay would no longer be economically justifiable. In addition, at the request of Airbus, one of their clients, AMS needed additional Internet access in order to check and enter data onto the Airbus web-based portal.

Although AMS' BT Frame stream network had served them well for several years, ADSL Broadband seemed to be the ideal solution to provide the additional Internet access required. However, introducing ADSL at each remote site would cause connection and management costs to rocket. MNI Services therefore set out to review the situation and find a more cost-effective solution.

The Solution

Fortunately, as a BT Value Added Reseller, MNI Services was able to recommend the best BT solution for AMS' requirements. The old Frame Relay connections were changed to BT IPClear to link together the seven sites. IPClear is far more flexible and future-proof than FrameRelay. A single 2 MB ADSL link to the Internet was then added from Birmingham, which meant that Internet access for all users could then be centrally managed.

"The combination of cost-saving plus the performance of our connections is impressive. What we would have spent on line rental and possible bandwidth upgrades we can now invest in the business." - David Cinderby

The new IPClear network reduced annual BT costs but provided the same service. In addition, to maximise the efficiency of the network without costly bandwidth upgrades, MNI Services also introduced the concept of network acceleration.

By installing Expand Network Acceleration technology onto the Wide Area Network at each site, the speed of the new WAN quadrupled, helping to avoid bottlenecks as users accessed and exchanged data across the network.

With the need for users to remotely access information held on the network servers, security was imperative. To protect the network, MNI Services supplied WatchGuard firewall technology to protect systems at the central site in Birmingham and control access into and out of the network. The WatchGuard boxes combine packet filters with sophisticated security proxies to monitor and secure Internet traffic, and uses 168-bit encryption for a secure VPN (Virtual Private Network) connection over the Internet.

The Outcome

The new high-capacity network now enables secure centralised Internet access for all 150 users via the Birmingham site. This is particularly useful for the remote tele-workers at AMS who can now connect to the corporate network over the Internet via a secure VPN to the central office.

When AMS were awarded the Airbus contract, one of the key factors of the success was that their IT systems were sophisticated enough to deliver their promises!



For more information about how our support services could benefit your business, please call us on 01553 818520 and ask to speak to one of our specialists.

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