



“ “ We have been able to create a state-of-the-art, scalable and future proofed network on time, on budget and it is reassuring that we have the infrastructure in place to support us in the event of an unplanned outage. ” ”

Steve Nicholls, Infrastructure Manager, Marston's

Vialtus Solutions helps Marston's keep the beer flowing



Following a period of rapid growth and diversification, Marston's PLC, the UK's largest brewer of cask beer in Britain and the country's leading independent brewing and pub retailing business, needed to upgrade its IT infrastructure. Over the last two to three years alone, the company's storage requirements had quadrupled, following new business acquisitions, resulting in their previous tape back-up system feeling the strain. Data recovery times had become unacceptable for the business and the smallest IT outage sometimes meant that some core business systems were offline for up to three hours after the restoration of the network.

- Marston's Plc has replaced its existing Leased Line infrastructure (supporting the HQ, brewing and distribution sites) with a Multi Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network from Vialtus Solutions to help it overcome Quality of Service (QoS) issues.
- Vialtus Solution's MPLS network enabled Marston's to replicate its HQ Network Operations Centre (NOC) in Wolverhampton, at its Burton upon Trent Disaster Recovery (DR) site.
- Vialtus Solutions helped Marston's to upgrade its IT infrastructure and strengthen its resilience without significant additional investment (over and above existing annualised IT costs).

NETWORK NIGGLES

"In addition to the need to re-evaluate our infrastructure to support our long term plans, service from our previous provider was poor", explains Steve Nicholls from Marston's. "Wide Area Network availability was not up to the required standard and customer service / engineer response times were slow. Our existing Virtual Private Network (VPN) connections, using Leased Lines, were slow and unreliable – not to mention costly."

Marston's wanted a more resilient, secure, robust, and cost effective system for connecting remote sites to the central corporate network. It needed all of its major sites to be able to access its data centre in Wolverhampton and disaster recovery facilities in Burton upon

Trent to ensure that, in the event of a failure in one part of the network that further business disruption was not caused by the outage. "The network upgrade was not just about IT", says Steve Nicholls, "it was driven by a wider strategic business need. Our worst nightmare would be a loss of data that meant we were not able to distribute beer to our landlords, or for them not to be able to order the products they needed from us to meet their customer's demands."

“ The network upgrade was not just about IT. It was driven by a wider strategic business need. ”

Steve Nicholls, Infrastructure Manager, Marston's

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A JOINED UP SOLUTION

Having researched the market and a range of potential suppliers, Marston's chose a Multi Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) infrastructure from Vialtus Solutions to connect nine key sites, including its headquarters and main data centre in Wolverhampton, a disaster recovery site in Burton upon Trent, and a range of operations, logistics, brewing and distribution functions around the UK.

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This approach also meant it was able to double the bandwidth and line speed between sites from its existing 10Mbps lines to high speed 20Mbps connections. "We were also able to create a 100MB link (for back-up and replication) between the company's two main sites at Burton and Wolverhampton", explains Steve Nicholls. "Service provisioning as part of Vialtus Solutions' service also enables us to prioritise traffic such as SAP Applications and VOIP over non critical applications.

Other benefits of Marston's new infrastructure include dual internet connections provisioned at both Wolverhampton and Burton on Trent sites, providing resilience for web and e-mail and VPN access to business applications for both remote users and their pub estate. MPLS also ensures that there is no single point of failure - all sites are able to access the Internet even if there is a failure in one part of the network. "We also wanted dedicated back-up and MPLS lines routed differently (different POP, exchange, switches etc.) between our sites in Burton and Wolverhampton to add additional resilience into the network",

explains Steve Nicholls. "Vialtus Solutions exceeded our specifications and delivered inside the budget."

Marston's new infrastructure has also enabled the various parts of the business - breweries, distribution depots and smaller remote administration offices - to receive a higher level of service, improving productivity and reducing day-to-day costs. Order management, dispatch, and business systems like Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) have all been consolidated onto the new reliable, resilient and robust infrastructure."

MORE FOR LESS

Marston's decision to transform its network has been validated. The new network has been tested with a number of controlled outages to ensure the resiliency, and it passed with flying colours every time. "The business is happy because we have been able to create a state-of-the-art, scalable and future proofed network on time, on budget and it is

reassuring that we have the infrastructure in place to support us in the event of an unplanned outage," Steve Nicholls explains. "We have made a five year investment to get the Marston's network in line with our business needs, and equally important, have been able to deliver a superior service for a similar cost to the old unreliable service."

"We have also found a technology partner that we can rely on." Marston's chose Vialtus Solutions because it provided the best technical solution for its requirements. "It was clear from day one that they understood, both technically and from a business perspective, what we were looking for and their response reflected that."

DOES WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN

"We are all working to achieve a common goal," concludes Steve Nicholls. "Vialtus Solutions is part of the Marston's team rather than the customer/vendor relationship - and they always deliver what they say they will - without exception."

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