Creative ITC

hive

WORKPLACE INNOVATION
improves productivity and time to market for Connected Homes

Enterprise Networking

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connected Homes
Smart energy solutions provider, part of Centrica Group

Challenge

Improve IT performance and control

Enable business to more than double in size

Solution

IT audit and risk assessment

Network refresh for improved speed and performance

Wi-Fi extension for increased mobility

Virtual private network linking all sites

Results

Faster time to market

Significant reduction in IT faults

More time to spend on transformational IT projects

CHALLENGE

Making our lives and homes easier to manage, Connected Homes creates smart energy solutions like the Hive Active Heating intelligent thermostat.

As a catalyst for the company's growth strategy, IT should have been an enabler but it was actually holding things back. Giles Howland, information systems manager at Connected Homes, says: *"Network design and performance issues, and a lack of documentation, made it virtually impossible to plan for new services and business expansion. It was like trying to build on quicksand."*

Having outgrown its Rathbone Place headquarters in central London the race was on to expand into other offices in Soho Square and Cambridge

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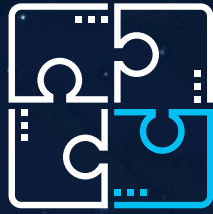
SOLUTION

> *"We needed a trusted partner, someone innovative, agile that had the skills and expertise to support our plans for international growth, especially in the United States,"*
>
> **Giles Howland**
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> *Connected Homes*

Called in to help, Creative Consulting deployed a subject matter expert to carry out a complete audit of the company's IT environment before even considering solutions.

The report assessed risks associated with the current network and offered recommendations on how best to prioritise the investment.

"It was like a fog had been lifted," says Giles. *"For the first time we had an accurate view of the network, right down to device types and software versions. Creative gave an honest and impartial view on under spec'd hardware in our estate that was no longer fit for purpose."*

During the report write up, Giles announced that Connected Homes had just acquired a new 50-person office in Soho-Square, whilst it negotiated and tackled the need for additional floor space within the existing HQ at Rathbone Place.

Creative designed and deployed a small cost effective enterprise-class Cisco networking solution comprising two Cisco Catalyst 3850 Series Switches and an ASA 5515X firewall, fully configured with a VPN tunnelled back to the Rathbone Place HQ. Connected Homes also took the opportunity to pilot a Cisco Meraki cloud-based wireless solution, which has since become the standard across the business.

SOLUTION

Upon completing the audit review document Creative helped to transform the core LAN infrastructure within Rathbone Place. Giles wanted a solution, which Creative fully scoped and designed, capable of empowering a workforce of around 200 initially over one floor, which could also scale across two floors and up to 350 staff at a future date. The new network had to deliver to the business fully resilient and secure 10Gbps performance.

The project also included new CAT6A flood cabling and a security upgrade using the latest generation of ASA Firewall 5512X with Cisco FirePOWER services fully deployed. Creative Consulting Wi-Fi experts also surveyed and identified optimal locations for Cisco Meraki wireless access points across both floors.

Additional data centre catalyst switching stacks were implemented to inject extra horsepower at the distribution layer of the network to boost front-end application performance.

Shortly after Connected Homes acquired a Cambridge-based company, Alert Me, with approximately 200 staff spread over two floors. To bring everything together, a virtual private network similar to that connecting Soho Square and Rathbone Place was implemented. Two Cisco ASA 5525X firewalls securely link the London offices with the other new site Cambridge.

All solutions designed and deployed include a fully managed service from Creative Consulting, backed with Cisco Smart Net Total Care for speedy fault resolution and hardware replacement.

RESULTS

- The Connected Homes workplaces have been transformed. Now, data and applications zip around the network. People work more productively and collaborate faster and more effectively than ever before. And, using Wi-Fi, they're no longer tied to desks and can make full and flexible use of available office space.

- Business processes are slicker too. Product development, a business imperative for Connected Homes, is a great example. Simple improvements, like the ability to move large files between dispersed project teams, are reducing development cycles and time to market.

- Better visibility and control of IT allows the company to more easily satisfy regulatory compliance, a top priority in the energy industry. Meanwhile, systems are more reliable and less complex to manage – meaning IT people have more time to spend on higher value projects.

- Giles concludes: *"Since moving to a fully-managed service we've seen a dramatic reduction in faults. The Creative Consulting people are very proactive, usually spotting and fixing potential issues before they impact the user experience."*

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Switching and Routing
Cisco Catalyst® 3850 and 4500X Series Switches

Wireless
Cisco Meraki MR18 and MR24 Access Points

Security
Cisco FirePOWER Services for Cisco ASA, Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFW)

Services
Creative Consulting Full IT Discovery and Detailed Solution Design Documentation
Cisco Smart Net Total Care

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