Connectivity overhaul boosts employee productivity and business continuity for ALD Automotive

Submitted by: Cloud Nine

Tuesday, 29 June 2010

Leasing and fleet management leader improves WAN performance while reducing costs

Leasing and fleet management company, ALD Automotive (http://www.aldautomotive.co.uk), has improved employee productivity by boosting capacity and business continuity on its connectivity infrastructure, while at the same time reducing networking costs.

The company, which operates 50,000 vehicles in the UK and is part of financial services group, Société Générale, has implemented a new resilient Wide Area Network (WAN) that gives 100 office and home based staff more reliable access to essential business applications including its FleetWare fleet management system, Microsoft Office software and Internet telephony.

The new solution, implemented by managed WAN, Internet services and hosting specialist, CI-Net (http://www.ci-net.com), is designed to provide improvements over ALD Automotive's previous MPLS (multiprotocol label switching) network as Rob Reeskamp, IT Manager explained:

"We're getting greater bandwidth with more resilience, which means we're more confident that staff in our regional sites and working from home can access corporate IT systems based in our Bristol head office – even at peak times, when we previously ran the risk of disruption due to delays and time outs using our older WAN set up. It also means we get more reliability when making voice calls on the network."

Introducing more resilient Internet connectivity is also important because the company hosts critical web facing servers for a network of dealers, enabling them to get online quotes and information in real time.

The increase in capacity has been achieved with the implementation of dual, load balanced Internet connections at ALD Automotive's three offices in Bristol, Milton Keynes and Northampton.

Stonegate load balancing and firewall appliances installed at each site ensure that traffic is balanced across the separate lines and the connections automatically failover to each other in the event of failure or delays.

CI-Net's data centre acts as a network hub for all the connections, with the Stonegates configured to enable traffic to take the fastest available route between ALD Automotive's sites.

As part of the network revamp, 50 home based workers, who still rely on an older Virtual Private Network (VPN), are gradually being given ADSL connections into the new WAN with Stonegate devices providing encryption.

"Home workers will get improved connectivity because their new links are being set up to come straight into the network via one of CI-Net's data centre locations - without going over the Internet. This will

reduce latency and contention and means they can start making voice calls over the network, enabling us to reduce our telephone costs" added Reeskamp.

ALD Automotive delivers voice calls across its network via a centrally hosted Avaya IP switch.

CI-Net is contracted to provide ongoing management of the WAN, including round-the- clock traffic monitoring. The company was chosen over a number of competitors because its proposals demonstrated the best understanding of ALD Automative's requirements with a tightly focused plan to address them said Reeskamp.

"The CI-Net solution is able to address our need for greater resilience and capacity while at the same being more cost effective than our previous network. So we get better performance at a lower cost. It also has a flexible design that can easily scale up to meet our future requirements," he said.

ALD Automotive's Bristol office has a Stonegate FW-1020 device, load balancing a 100Mb bearer (20Mbps useable) and 2Mbps Leased Line. Northampton has a Stonegate FW-300 with a 10Mbps bearer (10Mbps useable) and 2Mbps leased line, whilst Milton Keynes has a Stonegate FW-300 with a 2Mbps Leased Line plus ADSL Max circuit.

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ALD Automotive
ALD Automotive is the operational leasing and fleet management business line of the Société Générale group. ALD Automotive is one of the largest providers in Europe and a company of reference on its market :
 Operates now in 39 countries,
 Employs 3 800 persons,
 Manages 786 518 vehicles (December 2008)

Combining professionalism and quality of services provides companies with value-added integrated solutions at both national and international levels.
www.aldautomotive.com

About CI-Net
Over 2,000 UK organisations rely on CI-Net's secure, resilient, managed wide area networks (WANs). These organisations choose CI-Net to manage their WAN because of the flexibility and comprehensive services we offer, the unrivalled quality and resilience of our network and our unparalleled reputation for innovation and customer support. Working closely with customers to understand specific requirements, CI-Net builds and supports solutions crafted from an extensive portfolio of connectivity solutions, security and optimisation products plus web and professional services to support a huge variety of on-line and e-business activities. CI-Net enables businesses of all sizes to communicate better with their customers, suppliers, partners, home workers, branch offices, temporary sites and mobile workers – no matter what the circumstances. CI-Net was formally called Community Internet plc.

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