

Case Study

Green thumb for the network



Customer COMPO

Business

Wholesaler for garden products, plant protection products and fertilisers

Sector

Garden products

Products and services

Colt SD WAN services

Challenge

Requires a network solution

enabling flexible and fail-safe

management of the branch network

Solution

Switching the network infrastructure from MPLS to SD WAN

Our business model is based on making promised delivery deadlines We can't afford a network failure. SD WAN minimises the risk of failures and ensures our business operations can continue even in the event of peak loads during the height of the gardening season

Martin Niehues, IT Director at COMPO

Meeting delivery deadlines with SD WAN

For companies like COMPO, an international supplier of horticultural and plant protection products, a network failure has major ramifications. A stable connection is vital to business because the entire organisation of orders, from invoicing to clearing the goods for customs, is electronic. If the network fails, it's not just communication, but the entire logistics system that grinds to a halt. If promised delivery deadlines are not met, the chain is interrupted, leaving the customer in front of empty shelves. This would have a devastating impact on the business and the manufacturer's image at the height of the horticultural season.

To ensure this scenario does not happen, COMPO has partnered with Colt, switching it's network infrastructure to a Software Defined Wide Area Network (SD WAN). This technology provides the flexibility to control data traffic and guarantees a high degree of protection against network failure.

The network is critical to business

COMPO, a leading supplier of branded products for plants, sells its supplies from 20 locations around the globe. It stocks large DIY stores, garden centres and cooperatives. It receives 80% of orders electronically. The entire order fulfilment process is managed using the SAP system, placing high demands on the network; requirements that the

previous multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) network was no longer able to meet. Locations with low bandwidth reported bottlenecks and found their business activities were being held back. As telephony switched to Voice over IP, the problems with managing data traffic and prioritising calls and video data arose. Since the contract for the MPLS network was expiring, COMPO decided to prioritise flexibility, and the possibility to intervene in traffic management and data traffic prioritisation in the new tender. Bidders were invited to put forward solutions.

Flexible and fail-safe with SD WAN

The majority of the bidders' answers to this requirement was SD WAN. This technology allows the entire network to be controlled flexibly due to a software-based network controller. This significantly reduces the time and effort required for maintenance and administration, as changes are not carried out manually using new hardware on site, but are instead done by a central instance.

"The decisive factor in choosing Colt's SD WAN solution was not the proposal for this technology, but rather Colt's promise to ensure a smooth transition to the new technology," said Martin Niehues, Head of IT at COMPO. "The transition is always the showstopper - we experienced difficulties in the past during the transition to



the MPLS network. In this tender, providers told us in March that it would be difficult to switch in September. As Colt operated the MPLS network, we knew we could count on existing lines continuing, facilitating the transition.”

The second crucial point was integrating the SIP trunking solution. “Colt already provides us with this, which meant it did not need to be carved out of the network. Colt offers its own cost-efficient SIP trunks and good service in all the countries where we operate,” Martin Niehues explains.

SD WAN allows 17 locations, five in Germany and 12 in other European countries, to be connected in line with their individual bandwidth requirements, even special requests are no problem. COMPO has a remote production site out in the moors of northern Germany, which has traditionally been difficult to integrate into the company network. However, as traffic control in the SD WAN is handled by Colt’s Customer Premise Equipment, this site is also benefiting from the new technology.

Instead of a single Internet breakout at company data centres, local Internet breakouts are now being used. Less expensive Internet lines are used for non-critical data traffic, while voice transmission and access to enterprise applications, such as SAP and Seeburger, benefit from the significant jump in bandwidth offered by the new network. Migration is under way; half of the sites are now using the new technology. “Where we’ve migrated, things are going fantastically,” says Martin Niehues. The new solution is running smoothly; problems due to high download rates or other data volumes are a thing of the past. “We are benefiting above all from the flexibility provided by better traffic control and the quality of service with VoIP. The costs have remained the same, but we have higher bandwidths and a network that is less susceptible to failures,” says Martin Niehues.

Investments in the network are investments in the future

The example of COMPO demonstrates that an efficient network infrastructure is a prerequisite for functioning logistics and selling products, especially for “last minute” business models. Only those who deliver on time and are available to their customers will come out on top. SD WAN not only minimises the risk of network failures, it is also a futureproof technology when it comes to the future development of ERP systems.



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