



RE: SOURCES
UNITED KINGDOM



A Winning Exercise in Consolidation

The Publicis Groupe has established itself as one of the world's largest creative and media houses. In London alone it incorporates 14 leading brands, totalling 2,800 employees.

Until recently the technologies supporting the UK businesses worked independently of one another across six locations, ensuring that individual identities and areas of specialism were maintained. However, operating across six sites was not without problems. In terms of infrastructure it resulted in the inheritance of wide area networks from multiple suppliers and data stored in seven separate data centres. This proved hard to manage and expensive. Consolidation was needed in order to support the Commitment to the Groupe's clients: "We owe our clients scrupulous respect of our contracts with them with the constant concern to provide them with maximum quality for minimum cost in the shortest possible time."

Lion Re:Sources was created by the Publicis Groupe on 6th January 2004 to bring a unified standard to their companies and enable them to benefit from the size and strength of the organisation as a whole. Certain 'non creative' functions were taken out of the agencies, including IT, finance, credit control and legal services. Phil Lambe, Operations and Engineering Director, Re:Sources, was tasked with the IT and infrastructure consolidation project. "The objective was to simplify the WAN and Internet connectivity infrastructure currently delivered to the six sites, provide resilience and consolidate all services to ensure optimum performance, quality and capacity is provided, whilst rationalising expenditure to maximise cost effectiveness".

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The Driver

Managing six disparate networks and seven data centres was both complex and resource-intensive. In addition to multiple technologies there were multiple suppliers to manage and individual SLAs for each agreement - all committing to differing service levels. While these factors alone warranted a review of the current infrastructure, it was the increase in online activity which was the final catalyst for Lambe. "We required more bandwidth to meet the increased demand but with the existing set-up an upgrade was not only going to be complicated but also costly. We decided we needed a common platform across all sites".

The additional emphasis on online activity meant that a resilient structure was now a real priority. As a result Lambe decided he would use two providers to ensure maximum uptime. He also decided that as part of simplifying the whole infrastructure data storage would be centralised at a primary hub site in West London, with a secondary hub site for additional back-up. The consolidation to a central data centre needed a primary link to the Internet, while resilience included between the sites.

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The Provider

Re:Sources undertook a thorough search of the marketplace in order to create a shortlist of suppliers. Lambe selected COLT to provide Gigabit links between the offices and Exponential-e to provide Internet Access to the primary and secondary hub sites, as well as

additional WAN connectivity between the primary and secondary hubs, and office sites. BT provided the tail circuits into Exponential-e.

Lambe was confident in his decision to select Exponential-e. "It was evident from our initial discussions and their proposal that they were prepared to go that extra mile. They demonstrated that their people and solutions were both flexible and adaptable".

Exponential-e proposed resilient WAN connectivity between the hub, secondary hub and remote sites, with resilient Internet Access delivered to both the primary and secondary hub sites. The network would run over Exponential-e's Multi-protocol Label Switching (MPLS) enabled Gigabit Ethernet network.

"Technically the solution fitted all of our objectives. In fact Exponential-e went further than the brief, recommending additional features to enhance the solution. It was their suggestion to introduce an 'Autonomous System' Number registration with RIPE to enable true Multi-homing so we would have complete autonomy from ISPs. This clearly demonstrated to us that they not only had the technical ability but that they understood what we as a business were trying to achieve".

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The Bespoke Service

Once the network plan was agreed implementation began. Exponential-e provided a 100Mbps Ethernet LAN extension (LES) circuit at the primary hub site and a 1000Mbps circuit at the secondary hub site. These connected the two buildings onto Exponential-e's MPLS-enabled network, known as the Service Creation Platform. Internet VLANs were then created to provide a connection from each hub site to dual IP Gateways. "The use of dual gateways was important as it meant that unlike most traditional ISP's this was not going to be a single point of failure", said Lambe .

Re:Sources was also given the option of load balancing the two connections in accordance with Internet usage between the two sites.

Exponential-e then began to connect the six sites. Using a combination of 10Mbps, 100Mbps and 1000Mbps circuits each site was connected into Exponential-e's network. VLANs were then configured across the network, with primary VLANs connecting each remote site back to the primary hub site. A secondary VLAN was also created from each remote site back to the secondary hub site. This was designed as a failover connection should the primary hub site fail all connections would revert to the secondary hub using the Exponential-e Network. The whole project was completed in 5 months. "Exponential-e was totally committed to the delivery of the project. They made the whole process as seamless as possible and ensured it was delivered on time".

The Technology

The new network is designed to provide a single, resilient platform, enabling effective use of bandwidth and a common transport for data and applications. All traffic from the six businesses, including video clips, pictures, audio files, presentations and general business data, now run across the wide area infrastructure. "Our traffic is traditionally bandwidth hungry but with the new infrastructure we don't experience bottlenecks. We now have over twice the capacity, delivering virtually 100%resilience for a quarter of the cost." Lambe has also benefited from the simplicity he desired.

"....we have embedded flexibility into our network".

"Exponential-e's PureEthernet™ approach means that the WAN solution delivers reliability, flexibility and scalability. By choosing Exponential-e we have embedded flexibility into our network. There unique approach means that we can increase bandwidth or 'swing' VLANs between sites as and when we need to with simple key strokes."

Additionally, if enhancements need to be made to the network in the future no further CapEx is required. This network solution has been designed to be fully scaleable and suitable for all types of traffic, so there will never be a situation where Re:Sources has to remove the legacy infrastructure and start again. “We have established a framework that is future proof. If we want to add new offices or decide to run voice between the offices we can”.

The Future

Lambe now has the framework in place guaranteeing him a future proof, scaleable network with increased capacity and resilience. “It was all about consolidating what we had to create a network which was simpler to manage and more effective, while ideally reducing costs. With Exponential-e’s help we have achieved all this and more.”

“We have established a framework that is future proof.”