Blue Illusion

Pioneering SD-WAN in over 100 sites in Australia

blue illusion®

Industry: Retail
Services: SD-WAN, Hosted PBX, Managed Services

Blue Illusion

Founded in 1998, Blue Illusion designs and produces a range of French-inspired women's apparel and homeware items. The Australian label operates 127 boutique stores across Australia, New Zealand, and North America, supported by a growing digital presence including its e-commerce store and an active community of more than 50 thousand Facebook followers. Blue Illusion prides itself on the unique, high-touch retail experience it brings to its customers – something it sought to enhance with digital transformation of its network infrastructure.

Challenges

- Multiple IT vendors and unmanaged services, creating growing risk of data loss
- Vendors unable to provide adequate SLA coverage for new VoIP system and ambitious network refresh

Solution

- SD-WAN combining MPLS over DSL and 4G underlay networks – one of the first of its kind in Australia
- Hosted voice and unified communications solution
- Enterprise-grade managed IaaS
- A fully managed solution with one vendor

Benefits

- Higher network redundancy, efficiency, and bandwidth scalability
- Greater agility for customer channels, including pop-up stores, shorter time to deploy
- Robust platform for ongoing digital transformation initiatives
- Removed need for core IT Infrastructure management
- IT team now able to focus core business IT transformation

Challenges:
Achieving digital ambitions amidst vendor conflicts and tight budgets

In order to embark on a digital transformation project Blue Illusion needed to consolidate its numerous IT service providers, whose numerous unmanaged services had created a growing risk of data loss for the retailer. Collating its ERP, systems, and network needs with a single provider would put Blue Illusion in a better position to upgrade its ageing infrastructure – including replacing its analogue phone system with a Voice-over-IP (VoIP)-ready network.

"Digital transformation forms a major imperative for all retailers today, but it can only succeed when all the fundamentals of infrastructure and technology get along well with one another," said Sud Patel, IT Manager at Blue Illusion. *"We had struggled to manage the often-differing approaches of our IT service providers in the past, something which didn't bode well for any large-scale transformation project."*

While a VoIP system would pave the way for business-wide improvements to productivity and agility, none of the vendors it initially approached – including two major telcos – could meet both Blue Illusion's network and VoIP needs while guaranteeing a sufficient quality of service. *"The other vendors couldn't back their SLAs,"* said Patel. *"NTT was transparent in saying that if they couldn't provide a solution with sufficiently robust SLAs, they wouldn't propose it in the first place."*

THE SD-WAN SOLUTION USES A DSL AND 4G UNDERLAY NETWORKS, GIVING BLUE ILLUSION FLEXIBLE AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE BANDWIDTH FOR BOTH VOIP AND BROADER NETWORK REQUIREMENTS IN ITS RETAIL OUTLETS AUSTRALIA-WIDE.

NTT Communications ICT Solutions

Case Study: Blue Illusion

Solution:
A "best of both worlds" network architecture

Blue Illusion had already worked with NTT Communications ICT Solutions (NTT ICT) on improvements to other parts of its infrastructure, including ERP hosting and certain areas of network management. When approached with Blue Illusion's VoIP conundrum, NTT ICT proposed to achieve the best of both worlds with a relatively new approach: Software-defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) architecture.

"Our hosted voice solution (Hosted PBX) met Blue Illusion's business needs, but we recognised that a standard DSL network wouldn't provide them with the future-ready capabilities that they were looking for," said Tarquin Bellinger, Chief Operating Officer, NTT Communications ICT Solutions. *"SD-WAN enabled us to provide the extra capacity and scalability that Blue Illusion wanted, at a price point that fit within their budget."*

The SD-WAN solution uses a DSL and 4G underlay networks, giving Blue Illusion flexible and high-performance bandwidth for both VoIP and broader network requirements in its retail outlets Australia-wide. Blue Illusion's SD-WAN will be one of the first of its kind to be implemented in Australia, but the prospect of pioneering such technology locally didn't faze the retailer.

"We were initially looking at a more traditional MPLS with 4G backup, but NTT proposed an SD-WAN solution leveraging MPLS over DSL which piqued our interest, combined with 4G," said Patel. *"After doing our own research, we found strong precedent for such solutions in other retail markets: GAP, for example, had already deployed over 1500 sites using SD-WAN. We were quite happy to be the first to pilot this sort of SD-WAN solution in Australia with NTT by our side."*

Benefits:
Greater agility, performance, and a digital first-mover advantage

Blue Illusion expects significant operational benefits from consolidating its voice, WAN, and broader infrastructure needs with NTT ICT. The VoIP deployment will provide Blue Illusion's stores with much higher speeds and network redundancy, with the combination of DSL and 4G connectivity giving the retailer's head office greater confidence in pushing digital initiatives to its stores nation-wide.

"The SD-WAN solution makes us much more agile than we used to be," said Patel. *"4G redundancy at stores means there's no downtime on our VoIP services – if there's contention on the DSL circuit, the SD-WAN uses 4G concurrently to route the priority VoIP traffic."*

Blue Illusion will also use the SD-WAN to support a range of new initiatives, from pop-up retail stores to a more comprehensive rollout of digital productivity tools including Microsoft Office 365 and other collaboration apps.

"The solution has helped us future-proof the business with much greater flexibility, both from the SD-WAN technology and NTT's service itself," says Patel. *"Our core ERP, for example, runs on a platform that most vendors don't provide the environment to spin up on. NTT was flexible enough to offer that environment and connect it to the broader SD-WAN configuration. They've brought full transparency with processes to everything they touch – I'd have no qualms recommending them to any business investing in digital transformation."*

"Blue Illusion looks set to gain a valuable first-mover advantage over other Australian retailers with SD-WAN, giving it the network capacity and agility to act on customer opportunities far faster than its competitors can," said Bellinger. *"We're grateful for the opportunity to bring together the various threads of its IT infrastructure into a consolidated, cohesive whole, and we're looking forward to this being the first step of an extremely successful digital transformation journey."*

THE SD-WAN SOLUTION MAKES US MUCH MORE AGILE THAN WE USED TO BE

For more information

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