CASE STUDY

ARUBA ESTABLISHES HIGH-PERFORMANCE, ‘MOBILE FIRST’ NETWORK FOR NETHERLANDS’ LARGEST UNION

FNV is the Netherlands’ largest trade union. Formed from the coming together of four separate unions in 2015, the new entity has more than 1 million members and a vision to transform how unions operate.

“We have an opportunity to rethink the whole notion of a union,” says Hans van der Kamp, IT infrastructure project manager, FNV. “We aim to be a modern, engaged and collaborative force for good. And that requires us to have a modern infrastructure.”

Creating a modern infrastructure is a real issue: as FNV brought together four unions, it also onboarded four different network solutions, each of them aging and prone to performance issues. The new FNV needed to modernise and standardise.

“Consistent workplace experience across all locations.
• High-density Wi-Fi where needed.
• Single view of entire network & simplified management.
• Flexible and secure employee and guest access control.
• Rapid and efficient roll-out of reliable ‘Mobile First’ network.
• Stable and scalable network for future innovation.”

FNV has a network now where everything can be wireless. It’s just the beginning, but that kind of freedom and simplicity can only help as we create a new purpose for FNV.

HANS VAN DER KAMP
IT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT MANAGER, FNV

UNIFORMITY OF SERVICE, CLARITY OF USAGE

The coming together would require a period of consolidation. FNV had approximately 100 offices around the country, the aim was to reduce this to 35, with four regional centres, a call centre, and a new, purpose built head office in Utrecht.

“At every location, we need to ensure the same guest experience,” says van der Kamp. “FNV employees and visitors should be able to come in, log on and enjoy the same network experience they would expect at home. All staff have laptops and everything should work wirelessly, wherever possible.”

Managing four different systems, he continues, was untenable. The solution would need to knit together three different types of office – the large, medium and small, while delivering a uniformity of service and clarity of network usage. The new head office expects to welcome up to 3,000 users a day.
A 'MOBILE FIRST' APPROACH
FNV wanted a 'Mobile First' network. It narrowed its options to two suppliers: Aruba and Cisco.

"Across the four unions we already had experience of both," says Gwan Kho, FNV’s IT infrastructure architect. "But this project was of a totally different scale in terms of coverage and control."

Kho admits there was a positive feeling towards Cisco, but closer scrutiny of the proposed solutions confirmed Aruba had the most relevant approach. “Ultimately, the Cisco solution was too complicated and too difficult to manage.”

Crucially, the Aruba solution was backed by Unica Schutte ICT, a long-term IT supplier to FNV, with experience of both Cisco and Aruba. “Unica Schutte ICT would be implementing the solution and they strongly favoured the end-to-end, Mobile First architecture of Aruba,” says Kho. “They told us Aruba is the best you can get for what you need, it works, and we’ll support it 100%.”

EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE ROLL-OUT
The Aruba solution is flexible enough to cater to the three location sizes, while ensuring uniformity. It relies on a range of Aruba 300 Series access points (including the AP-315 for high-density areas), two Aruba 3810 Switches in the core, and 90 Aruba 2930F Switches distributed throughout all locations. In order to enhance the connectivity and roaming experience, the Aruba ClientMatch service is also deployed.

The first priority is to create a stable network. In the near future, Aruba ClearPass Policy Manager (particularly the Onboard feature) will be deployed to manage and authenticate devices and manage user access. “Being able to detect and profile the connecting devices as well as securing them on the network was a critical need,” says Kho. “We understood the benefit of Aruba ClearPass Policy Manager and plan for it to be deployed once all networks have been fully implemented.”

In addition, the Aruba Zero-Touch Deployment capability of the LAN and WLAN infrastructure was a feature which enabled centralised and rapid deployment across all locations. “This, along with the Unica Schutte ICT can-do culture, assured us the roll-out would proceed reliably and efficiently,” says Kho.

CREATING A FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE
Kho expects the roll-out of the few remaining sites to be complete by November 2017. The first phase has allowed FNV to open its new head office in Utrecht, with full ‘Mobile First’ functionality, along with 12 new local offices. Employees are now able to work from any office.

“They can walk in, find a space to work or hold a meeting, and enjoy flawless connectivity,” says Kho. “We have 1,000 regular users in the head office on an average day, up to 3,000 on busier days. To date, we’ve had no issues. We built a headroom for up to 4,000 users.”

Although BYOD has not yet been deployed, all users including guests enter any location, register and use the Internet. The next stage of the plan is to allow secure access to FNV systems for employees and collaborators. There may be tiered access for FNV members. “We have Aruba ClearPass Policy Manager in place, the next step is to create the policies,” says Kho.

High-performance collaborative environment
In all locations, Microsoft Office 365 and Skype for Business are used. Skype 4 Business is mainly used for VoIP over Wi-Fi and Aruba's APP-RF service ensures the best QoS and communication experience for this application for FNV. Across the sites, the Citrix Virtual Desktop Interface (VDI) is also in use and running seamlessly over the Aruba Wi-Fi.

BUILDING A MODERN UNION
Van der Kamp says the new network enables FNV to present a modern face, with flexible workspaces and reliable access to the latest workplace productivity tools.

“Maybe our offices will become places of learning, or for giving job advice, or legal advice, or liaising with the government. We have a network now where everything can be wireless. It’s just the beginning, but that kind of freedom and simplicity can only help as we create a new purpose for FNV.”