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CASE STUDY

UNITED
KINGDOM

RETAIL

DELIVERING 5-STAR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

LUSH
FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS

Bond MPLS with commercial internet to provide stores with reliable access to critical payment system, VoIP and business applications, enabling staff to focus on customer experience.

When people want to luxuriate in the bath or shower, many choose soaps and shampoos from Lush, known for its fresh, ethically sourced and produced bath and beauty products. Even shopping in one of Lush's stores across the UK and Europe is a 5-star experience, enabled by technology.

The challenge for Technical Operations Manager Brad Candy was each store had a single MPLS circuit connecting to critical data centre applications. If that circuit went down the stores could not complete customer transactions or digitally demonstrate their cool products. Candy recalls, "The best we could do was fall back on manual trading. That single point of failure became detrimental to the business."

SELF-HEALING SD-WAN KEEPS STORES UP AND RUNNING

Candy knew that SD-WAN enabled automated circuit failover. But he quickly discovered that SD-WAN could bring much more to the business when technology partner, CDW, introduced him to Silver Peak and the Aruba EdgeConnect SD-WAN platform.

With EdgeConnect, Candy found the automated, sub-millisecond circuit failover he needed to solve the network downtime problems. He also saw how to further improve network services to the stores and enhance the business with additional capabilities like automation, path conditioning, quality of service, dynamic path control, and application-based traffic prioritisation.

REQUIREMENTS

- Assure reliable, highly available network connectivity for payment system
- Deliver excellent customer experience on mobile app used for in-store demos
- Enable consistent store access to critical stock management application
- Provide high quality of experience for VoIP

SOLUTION

- Aruba EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform
- Aruba Unity-Orchestrator centralised management console

OUTCOMES

- Optimises network performance and reliability to support critical payment system and stock management application
- Enables local internet breakout at stores for more efficient access to Google G Suite
- Secures customer credit card data in compliance with PCI regulations through application traffic segmentation
- Eliminates store downtime due to outages or brownouts on any single WAN circuit
- Allows Lush sales staff to focus on the customer experience instead of working around network problems

"What stood out with EdgeConnect was we could get all this additional functionality with zero overhead on the network," Candy says.

DELIVERS A HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Taking advantage of technical assistance from Aruba, Candy and his team began rolling out the EdgeConnect platform, starting with 21 store locations in the UK and Germany deployed in just under five weeks. Additional locations, including the company's headquarters and manufacturing operations, will be rolled out over time.

> "The sales staff don't want to worry about the network or back office. This SD-WAN technology has helped hugely. Staff can do what they do best and put more attention to the customers."

NBRAD CANDY
Technical Operations Manager, Lush

At each store, EdgeConnect is terminated with one MPLS circuit bonded with a second commercial internet circuit. Candy also configured business intent overlays to guarantee each class of application the appropriate network resources it needs based on business priority.

The in-house-developed point of sale system, Lush Pay, is labelled "PCI" because it must comply with payment card industry (PCI) security requirements, and this application is assured the highest network priority. VoIP services and a bespoke stock management application receive the second-highest priority. A third overlay classifies non-critical applications used by store employees and customers, such as Lush's smartphone app—Lush Lens—as a lower priority, while guest Wi-Fi receives the lowest priority.

DELIVERS A HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

After deploying the EdgeConnect platform, Lush saw almost immediate improvements at the stores. The company's Birmingham, England store, which had chronic connectivity problems and sluggish application performance, suddenly had a stable network with payments going through flawlessly. Network downtime became a thing of the past.

"Generally, we see that card payments run faster and the uptime has been a big improvement," Candy notes. "Recently our Manchester store lost its MPLS connection but the store did not notice there was an issue on the network. The store continued to function as usual during the six weeks of outages. The SD-WAN enables us to provide assurance to the retail business as a whole that this technology makes their lives easier."

Most importantly, the Aruba SD-WAN helps Lush and its sales staff deliver a 5-star shopping experience for customers. "The sales staff don't want to worry about the network or back office. This SD-WAN technology has helped hugely. Staff can do what they do best and put more attention to the customers."

DETAILED NETWORK OBSERVABILITY ASSURES SERVICE QUALITY

Leveraging the routing interoperability and stateful zone-based firewall within the unified EdgeConnect platform, Candy also enables each store to break out locally to the internet and connect with cloud applications such as Google G Suite. Candy notes, "I've taken a hybrid view, balancing on-prem with cloud and focusing on dashboard-driven technologies that provide us high visibility into the network to assure service quality for the stores."

This strategy also favoured Aruba in Candy's view, because the Aruba Unity Orchestrator management console could provide the Lush technical operations team with centralised observability and control across the SD-WAN through a real-time dashboard. Moreover, Lush's entire digital services team, which supports the company's IT and bespoke applications, has access to Orchestrator.

"Orchestrator makes it easy for anyone to monitor what's happening with application traffic on the network, how applications are performing and if there's ever any connectivity loss," Candy points out. "It's a huge time-saver. The visibility we get with Orchestrator is highly granular, which allows us to drill down quickly to see where the fault is and address the issue. It means that stores stay online and can get on with doing their piece, selling our products."

Candy concludes, "We look for the same kind of 5-star service in our vendors that Lush is known for—that attention to detail - and Aruba has delivered. The technology is brilliant, and the partnership we have with our account manager is also key. It's good to know someone is not just selling you a product, they're involved in making sure the solution benefits our business."

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