

The right connection

Constant network availability for its globally scattered staff was a key concern for Reuters when deploying a corporate access service. Lara Williams reports

Reuters, the world's largest multimedia news agency, cannot put a price on reliable connectivity. Delivering news as it happens and ahead of the competition is vital to maintaining success.

While many organisations introduce new technology to cut costs, Reuters' decision to hire remote working specialist iPass was primarily service-driven.

The company wanted to provide its remote workers with continuous and absolute availability to its network, and from every part of the world.

Toby Wright, Reuters' European head of content technology services, is responsible for the company's mobile workforce, and his main concern before the implementation of the iPass corporate access service 18 months ago was bad connectivity to the organisation's network. Journalists working remotely were finding that slow and unreliable access was hampering efficiency



Some 8,000 Reuters staff are now able to access the organisation's network from anywhere in the world

and causing frustration.

As well as the accessibility problems, Wright says the system was not cost-effective because the company was running separate accounts with multiple ISPs across the globe.

'We were spending too many man hours on connectivity problems through dealing with so many ISPs – it was an absolute nightmare,' he says.

'We didn't have a single viewpoint of what was going on, so we couldn't control costs.'

But iPass helped the company to consolidate and monitor its costs. And Wright can now access reports that show connectivity costs.

'I pay just three bills every month for each region now, rather than the hundreds we received from ISPs before,' he says.

'It is simplified and I can see who the top spenders are.'

With the benefits already clear, Wright says he has no complaints about the service.

'As far as I'm concerned it is set-and-forget. We put iPass on an internal customer's laptop and I know they are going to be able to access the network from anywhere in the world. I rarely hear from them again,' he says.

Staff access the network by dialling a single phone number. The average logon time has been reduced from several minutes to between 20 and 30 seconds.

In the event of problems, iPass provides a support line. Reuters also has an availability service agreement and a call completion service level agreement.

Before the system rollout 18 months ago, Wright says Reuters needed one full-time member of staff to deal with remote staff.

'But I don't need anyone dealing with it anymore,' he says.

'That problem is off my hands.'

Improved security has been another benefit of the system implementation.

'Because the system is centralised we can see who accesses the network, because I am in control of user identities,' he says.

'The beauty of this system is that I am in charge of network credentials, not the vendor.'

No user can access the network without genuine credentials, and the only security threats Wright has experienced are when people have accessed the network fraudulently using stolen credentials. He acknowledges that he cannot mitigate that scenario.

iPass was rolled out to 8,000 staff across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, North America and Asia-Pacific regions. Since the implementation, Reuters has seen a significant rise in the number of employees connecting remotely.

The organisation has about 1,000 users logging on at any given time, with figures peaking during large news events.

Wright says he would not want to use any other method to get his remote working staff into the corporate systems.

'Without sounding like an advert, I really think this is one of our biggest success stories in the past couple of years,' he says.

'It has really improved our journalists' ability to do their job and simplified their daily lives.'

Remote working facts

■ A recent survey of 56 mobile and remote-access decision-makers in North America and Europe by analyst Forrester Research found that, on average, more than 66 per cent of employees work away from the office at least five days a month. Twenty-one per cent do so two or more days a week.

■ According to Forrester, the main challenge to implementing mobility and remote access is security. The top 2006 priorities are usability and productivity.

■ Remote access will affect at least 37 per cent of

full-time employees in western Europe by 2010, according to analyst Gartner.

■ A survey of large organisations carried out by Coleman Parkes Research earlier this year found that most plan to increase investment in mobile systems in the next three years, and a third predict they will need fewer offices and less space. Firms also forecast that remote access through laptops will drop from 96 per cent to just over half, as more handheld devices, such as smartphones and PDAs, are deployed.

Reuters delivers security with IM
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