

Making a Green Car Wash Company Even More Efficient

Brown Bear Car Wash relies on its network to securely connect employees to headquarters and to deliver more efficient service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>BROWN BEAR CAR WASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry: Retail • Location: Seattle, WA • Number of Employees: 200 employees
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect over 50 retail locations to company headquarters to exchange business data, video surveillance, and process credit card information, securely and reliably.
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure company network improves visibility into business operations, saves employees' time, and produces better customer service.
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco small business network solutions deliver secure VPN connectivity from retail locations to headquarters on one flexible, manageable platform. • Cisco SMARTnet helps maintain operational health of the network • Cisco Capital financing allows Brown Bear to manage its cash flow.

Challenge

For more than 50 years, Brown Bear Car Wash has delivered superior service to customers throughout the Pacific Northwest. Brown Bear has always been an innovative company, and prides itself on its focus on the environment, using friendly soaps and recycled water. To help keep operations as efficient as possible, the company depends on innovative technology, including a virtual private network (VPN) that connects its retail locations to the company headquarters.

Brown Bear's retail locations connect to the network to process credit card information, keep sales data current, and transmit video surveillance images. However, its previous network was a patchwork of products from several different companies, which was unstable and frequently went down. The result was frustrated employees, lost sales data, and hours of staff time wasted on network repairs.

"Our VPN tunnels would go down for hours at a time, and our stores wouldn't know it," says Shay Pickett, Manager of IT at Brown Bear. "We had no way of troubleshooting the issues, so retail staff spent a lot of time contacting us, and we would have to go back and forth trying to fix the issues."

The network instability made the company's three-person IT team feel as though they were constantly fighting fires, and kept them from being able to think about the future of the network. To fix a problem, the company might have to contact several different vendors, which cost additional time and money.

"Managing a network that was not functioning properly was a real challenge," says Pickett. "You face the same problems over and over, and you feel like you're letting other people down. You're not able to do your job properly."

Brown Bear needed a complete network solution from one company that could deliver the reliability and security that the company needed to keep its business connected. The solution would also have to be flexible, to change and grow as the company's needs evolved.

Results

The new Cisco® solution lets each of Brown Bear's retail locations stay connected to headquarters, to give the company better visibility into all of its business operations. Its reliable VPN connections provide sales data that is current and accurate, so management can make more informed decisions in real time. The solution also improves security by powering IP surveillance cameras at car washes.

Because the network is more dependable and automated, Brown Bear's staff at every location can spend less time worrying about network connections, and more time focusing on their jobs. "Before we had a Cisco network, we had to manually perform basic tasks that should have been automated," says Pickett. "Six months ago we were a pen and paper organization calling stores daily to get their financial numbers, and now everything is automated. This frees us up to focus on other projects that will help the company."

"Having more reliable communications solved our IT problem and helped us out from a financial standpoint," says Steve Palmer, chief financial officer at Brown Bear. "But more importantly, the Cisco solution improves operations because our managers don't have to worry about the technology, and can focus on the one thing that they do best, and that's taking care of our customers."

By connecting employees to the tools and information that they need to do their jobs, the solution has also helped employees be more productive, regardless of where they are working.

"With our previous network, our district managers would have to stop at a public coffee shop to be able to download their email and work efficiently," says Pickett. "With our new system, they can simply drive on the lot to connect to a VPN. They don't even have to get out of their car."

Solution

Brown Bear is a dynamic company that adds new locations regularly, so it needed a solution that could easily evolve. Cisco Partner Cynnex Networks designed the solution to easily support requests for new locations or network applications. Flexible finance options provided by Cisco Capital helped make the solution more affordable for Brown Bear to purchase.

"Cynnex offered us an entire solution from A to Z, which we could put in place, fix our problems, and be reliable," says Pickett.

Cynnex installed Cisco ASA Routers at each of Brown Bear's retail locations, to provide a secure, encrypted VPN connection to the company's headquarters. Their built-in security makes using the network easier for retail managers, who can simply log on to a store's computer to enjoy a secure, dedicated connection back to headquarters.

Easy to manage and maintain, the Cisco network can easily scale to accommodate new locations and applications. "With our previous system it was extremely difficult to forecast whether you could add a new project or a new system to the network," says Shay. "With our current system we have the confidence that we can add whatever we need, whenever we need it, and it's just made easy."

The Cisco small business network designed and implemented by Cynnex is covered by a Cisco SMARTnet® contract, which gives Brown Bear the peace of mind knowing that their business will not be disrupted due to an equipment failure.

"With SMARTnet we have the assurance that our network is going to work the way that we need it to work when we need it to work," says Shay.

Cynnex can manage and troubleshoot Brown Bear's solution remotely, eliminating the need for expensive "truck rolls" if network issues arise. Remote management not only saves money, but underscores Brown Bear's focus on running an efficient, "green" business.

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– Steve Palmer, Chief Financial Officer, Brown Bear Car Wash

Next Steps

The Cisco network is not only making Brown Bear's business more efficient, but will help the company deploy new programs to serve customers better in the future.

"We wanted a system that could grow with us, so that we could add anything that's coming down the road, such as voice over IP phones, credit card processing, loyalty cards, and other features," says Pickett.

Working closely with its Cisco partner, Brown Bear is confident that its network won't just work today, but will act as a springboard for growth in the future.

"We can be more efficient here in the office and in the field, and that means we can grow," says Palmer. "That means we can expand, and we can bring top notch service to more customers."

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smallbusiness> or contact your authorized Cisco salesperson.



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