

CISCO IP NETWORK PAVES THE WAY FOR UK'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS SUSTAINABILITY CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The NMSI has used a Cisco IP network to improve communications at one of its locations; lay the foundation network for one of the UK's most ambitious sustainability centres and provide a robust and cost-effective solution for networking all of the NMSI's exhibitions around the UK including the Science Museum in London.

Cisco network lays foundation for national sustainability centre

The National Museum of Science & Industry (NMSI) - which incorporates the National Railway Museum, the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television and its flag-ship the Science Museum in London - has launched a plan to create one of the UK's most ambitious sustainable development exhibitions. The NMSI is developing a disused World War II airfield at Wroughton, near Swindon to create an international exhibition - currently named Creative Planet - about sustainable development. The NMSI's remit is to engage with the public to promote human ingenuity in sciences and the vision for Creative Planet is to educate people about protecting global resources and sharing them equitably between current and future generations.

Currently, the 562 acre site at Wroughton is used by the NMSI for storing large artefacts and exhibits used in its museums such as aeroplanes, buses, combine harvesters and a massive turn-of-the-century printing press from the Daily Express newspaper. Most of the NMSI's collection is in storage since only 10 to 15 percent of it is on display at any one time to the public. Creative Planet is also an opportunity to show more of the collection.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- National Museum of Science & Industry (NMSI)

INDUSTRY

- Public sector

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Replace an outdated and aging communications infrastructure
- Create an environment fit for the UK's leading sustainability exhibition centre
- Support and reflect the NMSI's philosophy of sustainability

NETWORK SOLUTION

- A Cisco IP voice and data network replacing an aging system which uses less energy and resources and offers value for money

BUSINESS VALUE

- Significantly improved communications and cut costs
- Cisco equipment solves an urgent problem and outperforms competitor solution
- Creates the foundation for a 562-acre sustainability centre of excellence
- Provides a future-proof, reliable and cost-effective solution for the NMSI's UK-wide networking needs

Much of the site at Wroughton was run down and the existing IT and network infrastructure was outdated. In tandem with developing Creative Planet, and to provide the exhibition with high-quality technology, NMSI decided to introduce a new network. As well as old, out dated network equipment, one of the problems encountered at Wroughton was the fact that windy or wet weather was causing wireless communication failures between the old RAF hangers and buildings.

Cisco chosen because of commitment and customer care

NMSI considered various different vendors, but quickly decided that Cisco was the best option. “There’s no doubt that Cisco is the best of breed. But it wasn’t just the quality of the equipment that led us to choose Cisco, it was also the time that the company was prepared to spend advising and supporting us. We’re quite a small customer for Cisco, so we were surprised and pleased at the company’s commitment to us,” says Julian Payne, network operations manager, NMSI.

The NMSI is a public organisation, funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. But since exhibition entry charges were removed and visitor numbers increased substantially, income has remained static. The policy within IT had been to try and save money by a patch and repair approach. However this has changed. “With the Cisco solution we believe it’s much better and now possible to put in something that is reliable and will give a good return on investment. We’re going to see some longevity out of the Cisco solution and it’s going to cause less problems. It’s obvious that Cisco is one of the top players in delivering quality and value for money,” says Payne.

Following the refurbishment of three buildings at the Wroughton site, NMSI has implemented a Cisco IP network which is linked to a WAN serving the other four NMSI locations around the UK. The network supports both data and voice communications at Wroughton and is used by 25 staff for traditional office systems and for managing the development of Creative Planet. As well as data, the network also supports an IP telephony solution, including Cisco’s Unity messaging software, around the Wroughton site.

The use of Cisco IP technology fitted well with the NMSI’s ethos on sustainability because it meant less cabling and the inline power capability of the Cisco equipment has resulted in lower electricity consumption. Payne says that on this alone, the NMSI expects to halve its costs.

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Cisco delivers significant network improvements and value for money

Since installing the Cisco IP network at Wroughton, it has delivered significant improvements in speed of access to local and remote NMSI applications and the Internet. A network that crashed regularly, took ages to load information and was very frustrating for users is now stable and operating beyond expectation with 100 percent up time.

The implementation of the Cisco network at Wroughton is a test case for extending the Cisco solution to the whole organisation. The NMSI has already used Cisco switches across its entire network of 1000 users as an emergency replacement because the existing equipment was failing. Payne says, "We've already started to roll out Cisco equipment to the rest of the NMSI network. But despite the fact that the Cisco switches were an emergency fix, they are performing a job beyond what we expected and far beyond the capability of other manufacturers' equipment. The Cisco equipment has proved itself to be much more resilient."

One of the main reasons for the Cisco IP network is as a foundation for the NMSI's Creative Planet project. When this is completed it will act as the hub for the National Centre for Sustainable Development (NCSD) – an international repository for information and best practice on sustainability. The exhibition site will comprise a series of knowledge farms demonstrating and exhibiting different aspects of sustainability such as farming and food, landscapes, living and communities, business and industry. There will also be state-of-the-art facilities for conferences, training sessions, multi-media, film, photography, broadcasting, publications and temporary exhibitions.

The NMSI plans to use the Cisco IP network to connect up the different knowledge farms and other parts of the Wroughton site to offer facilities such as public information kiosks and Internet access.

Cisco's IP telephony system is proving to be a big asset to NMSI. It fits with the organisation's sustainability policy since it utilises the IP network. The system is more stable and has given users more features such as voicemail, call forwarding, call barring and the ability to identify the caller. The Cisco IP network has also enabled NMSI to roll out Microsoft Exchange and improve the email system at the Wroughton site.

NMSI is planning to develop a new building at Wroughton which will act as the information centre for the Creative Planet project. It will be linked to the Cisco IP network and will use wireless communications further supporting the NMSI's sustainability policy.

"The Cisco network has more than replaced the previous system. It has helped us save money, it fits well with our sustainability philosophy and it provides an excellent, value-for-money solution and foundation for the Creative Planet project and all our networking needs in the future," says Payne.

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