

# National service Delcredere

## Converged network for data and IP telephony for future-oriented communications infrastructure in new offices

“DATA AS WELL AS SPEECH AND VIDEO ARE BEING SENT MORE AND MORE OFTEN OVER THE SAME IP NETWORK. SO IT’S LOGICAL THAT WHOEVER WANTS A FUTURE-ORIENTED INVESTMENT IS SEARCHING FOR SUCH A CONVERGED NETWORK. MIXED SYSTEMS THAT COMBINE ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ARE OF LITTLE USE THEN.”

Bernard Michel, head of the IT department at Delcredere

Delcredere, the Belgian market leader in the field of export credit insurance, is an independent institution that works under state guarantee. The organisation promotes international economic relations, mainly by protecting companies against the risks of international trade with upcoming markets and developing countries. Some 670 companies regularly call on Delcredere when they venture into exports and imports with distant countries and foreign investments. Only fifty or so of these are big companies; the rest are SMEs. After all, Delcredere looks for tailor-made solutions for safeguarding against risks.

In January 2003 Delcredere decided that in the summer of that year it would move to new offices in the Sapphire building. So this had to be quickly fitted out with a totally new computer and telephone network. “Our previous infrastructure was gradually becoming outdated, so we decided to start completely from scratch in our new offices. Nowadays, data as well as speech and video are being sent more and more often over IP networks. Since we want a future-oriented investment, it was logical to be searching for a converged network instead of hybrid systems that combine analogue and digital technology,” according to Bernard Michel, head of the IT department at Delcredere.

For Delcredere, a reliable communications infrastructure is not secondary. “We offer services, so telephone and e-mail are vital.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**■ BACKGROUND**  
Delcredere, the Belgian market leader in the field of export credit insurance, is an independent institution that works under state guarantee. The organisation promotes international economic relations, mainly by protecting companies against the risks of international trade with upcoming markets and developing countries.

**■ CHALLENGE**  
In January 2003 Delcredere decided that in the summer of that year it would move to new offices in the Sapphire building. So this had to be quickly fitted out with a totally new computer and telephone network. Because its previous infrastructure was gradually becoming outdated, Delcredere decided to start completely from scratch and install a converged network for speech, data and video.

**■ SOLUTION**  
Dimension Data fitted out the new offices in Montoyerstraat with a redundant Cisco network for data and telephony. Cisco Catalyst switches make up the backbone of the network: they direct the data traffic and at the same time provide the telephone sets with power thanks to inline power technology. The CallManager, Cisco’s IP switchboard, supports around 250 Cisco IP telephone sets in the building.

**■ RESULTS**  
Delcredere has a single converged network for transporting data, speech and video. Thanks to the homogeneous infrastructure the management of the network is simpler and you can easily modify it. Moreover, Delcredere is all set now to support numerous new applications, such as systems for home working, wireless communication and integration of other technical developments.

All our activities depend on flexible communications and information exchange,” explains Bernard Michel. “So we offer our customers real-time information through the Internet, such as risk analyses according to country and explanation about credit insurance techniques. Customers can also calculate

premiums themselves on our site or consult specific information about their insurance policy through the extranet.”

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the backbone of the network: they direct the data traffic and at the same time provide the telephone sets with power thanks to inline power technology. The CallManager, Cisco's IP switchboard, supports around 250 Cisco IP telephone sets in the building. Because the telephones have one built-in switch, they need just one network connection per user for linking both the PC and telephone. They can simply connect the PC with the telephone. "Because you just have to put in one network for data and telephony, you can save on cabling in new buildings. And the built-in switches and inline power limit the number of network connections and sockets that you have to provide," according to Bernard Michel.

"Our choice of Cisco equipment was partly prompted by the convenience that the products from a market leader bring with them. We are already familiar with some Cisco products because we worked with them previously. Moreover, with such a stable supplier you can always depend on being able to find support anywhere. Ultimately, you also want a long-lasting investment. What is more, the products offer good guarantees for compatibility with other organisations and companies. And finally, and this is also very important, Cisco is one of the few that has a completely integrated offering for data and telephony. In this way you can standardise and develop a homogeneous network that is easily and cost-effectively maintained and modified," says Bernard Michel.

Delcredere takes care of the maintenance together with Dimension Data. Interesting, current references, such as the implementations at Pfizer and Brico, undoubtedly played a part in the selection of the network specialist as an implementation and maintenance partner. "The maintenance of the telephone network has certainly been highly simplified," emphasises Bernard Michel. Whereas before we had to call in a telephony partner, now our people can do a number of things themselves, such as for example set up a new user or move or install sets. Wherever there is a network connection, you can in any case get a telephone working. That's out of the question with traditional telephony. For more complex cases, such as extending the network for instance, we will still use Dimension Data. But overall the management of such a converged network is more obvious and cheaper."

The new telephone system also offers the end-users benefits, including more mobility. Bernard Michel: "Our staff can now log on to any set with a user name and a password and then automatically receive calls intended for them. With the Cisco SoftPhone software, this mobility goes a step further. With it you get a software application with an IP telephone on your computer and you can still carry on receiving calls outside the company if you have a good Internet connection. We are testing this system to allow people to work more easily from home or abroad, if necessary, in the future."

"We also make it a habit to log off the system every evening so that no one can misuse the set. These will then only work for emergency calls. Moreover, we have set up a cascade system, so that incoming calls for those absent are automatically forwarded to a colleague. So we can still take care of customers with urgent questions," continues Bernard Michel.

The biggest advantage of the new converged network is, according to Bernard Michel, that Delcredere now has a flexible infrastructure for developing and supporting additional applications in the future. "You really can move in all directions. Now that our installation is running, we are evaluating the extra possibilities as part of our activities. We are examining for example whether we could install a wireless network, both for data traffic as well as for telephony. Because data and speech travel over the same network, this is perfectly possible with the same equipment. But the integration with the IP network can go much further. We would also be able to simplify the management of the building by connecting to the network systems for the heating, the burglar alarm and the access control, the fire alarm and the camera surveillance. So you can keep an eye on them and control them remotely. This means you are alerted faster if anything unusual happens and can quickly intervene in accidents or even prevent them," says Bernard Michel.

Finally, in the long term Delcredere also has plans to rent out a part of its building to other organisations. "We just use a part of the offices and have a good infrastructure for providing information, communication and other practical services to other leaseholders. Moreover, our Cisco switches allow for the creation of virtual LANs or separate subnetworks on our physical network, so that specific data streams remain strictly separated. In this way, we can guarantee the integrity of everyone's data, for data, speech as well as for video," concludes Bernard Michel.

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