



eBUSINESS & RESILIENCE CENTRE (eBRC)

eBRC MAKES THE MOST OF THE AVAILABLE CAPACITIES IN ITS NEW DATA CENTRE THANKS TO THE CISCO NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE AND TELEPHONY

“BY OPTING FOR IP TELEPHONY, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF TELEPHONE EXCHANGES, ALLOWING US IN TURN TO CUT DOWN ON OUR MAINTENANCE COSTS. SEGMENTATION ALSO ALLOWS US TO EXPLOIT ALL THE AVAILABLE WORK PLACES, WHETHER THE CLIENT NEEDS 100 OR 40 WORK STATIONS.”

Bernard Letellier, Project Manager and IT Manager with eBRC

SUMMARY

PROFILE

Founded in 2000, the e-Business Resilience Centre (eBRC) supplies its clients with a global security service that is unequalled within a 350 km radius around the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The company has specialised in business continuity, ranging from IT security to data protection, as well as the shared management of IT platforms. It does so by proposing services such as protection against operational risks, the restoration of disrupted business activities, centralised management of IT security, data storage as well as the global management of a company's IT and telecommunications networks. eBRC operates via three data centres.

Two are based in Luxembourg city centre. A third, brand new centre was built in 2006 in Windhof, close to the Belgian border. This new Resilience Centre boasts one of the highest redundancy levels in Europe. The IT rooms are spread over a surface area of no less than 5 200 m² and have over 400 end-user positions to manage any emergency situations that arise on its clients' premises. eBRC's clients come mainly from the industrial, public and banking sectors. The Luxembourg-based company has also been awarded the PSF (Financial Industry Professional) accreditation.

CHALLENGE

The company's growth has led to the setting up of a third data centre in Luxembourg. By equipping it with cutting-edge technology, eBRC wanted to make Luxembourg the European centre of excellence in the field of business resilience. In the new data centre, eBRC has also set aside spaces where its clients can immediately resume their activities in the event of a "catastrophe" scenario. That is why eBRC must also deploy the technologies that are today used by its clients. At the same time, the clients must recognise the eBRC technology in order to be quickly operational again. When it comes to telephony, several eBRC clients have already adopted an IP-based telephony solution. Hence eBRC's decision to deploy this same technology in its new data centre.

On the strength of its PSF accreditation, eBRC also serves clients in the banking sector, which is why the new data centre also had to be equipped with trading rooms to ensure the continuity of the trading activities of our banking clients. The system managing the trading telephones had to be an integral part of the new IP telephony solution.

Finally, the communication infrastructure also had to be modular to be able to host user groups of different sizes and to be able to segment them in the various compartments of the network. In the event of multiple invocations, several clients of different sizes with different activities had to be able to simultaneously resume their disrupted critical activities. In order to optimise the existing solution in the city centre, the company started looking for new communication and network technologies for its new data centre.

SOLUTION

At the beginning of 2006, eBRC launched a call for tender to find a solution capable of taking on board these different demands. Around ten companies responded to the call. In cooperation with Netcore, a supplier of IP communication and telephony networks, eBRC examined which supplier was in a position to come up with a made-to-measure solution. At the end of the day, the data centre

specialist decided to install a 100% Cisco solution for the IP network and telephony. To do so, Netcore supplied 2 Cisco CallManagers, 500 IP telephones and 20 Catalyst switches. IPTrade Network technology was chosen for the trading room telephones. In September 2006, the installation of the telephony solution was already completed ... before the connection of the computers.





SUMMARY (FOLLOWING)

RESULTS

In the event of an emergency, clients can transfer a part of their personnel on the eBRC site. These employees are allocated work stations with functions that are similar to those of their usual office environment and can therefore quickly get back down to work again. Given that the clients' business applications are also hosted by eBRC, they also remain available in the event of disruption. Thanks to the Cisco network technology, eBRC can host several different clients simultaneously with varying sizes of user groups. They can be spread as required over the 430 available work stations. The network is segmented accordingly. In this way, eBRC can optimally exploit the available capacities at work station level and thus tangibly increase the profitability of its resilience centre.

The user's temporary work station comes with a new Cisco IP telephone. eBRC can pre-programme four numbers from the client's office, allowing one employee to handle the telephone calls of three other colleagues. The IP telephone screen displays the address book of the entire company. This set-up keeps the hassle of moving to a new environment to a minimum and the final client sees almost no difference in the service. Thanks to the Cisco technology, the traders of eBRC's banking clients find exactly the same environment as at the office. Thanks to the Cisco IP telephony and the IP trading system from IPTrade Networks, the eBRC clients today benefit from the very latest communication technologies to carry on with their work.

The modularity of the network and the Cisco CallManager also allow eBRC to propose new services, namely contact centre activities thanks to the "group hunting" function of the IP telephone exchange.

In 2005, eBRC decided to build a third data centre in order to expand its activities and make Luxembourg the nerve centre of business continuity in North West Europe. The company offers its clients over 550 work stations on the first site located in Gasperich (Luxembourg-City). The different rooms of these two buildings are subdivided into fixed departments. The addition of the third data centre now allows eBRC to propose almost 1000 work stations that its clients can use to pursue their activities should any incident arise. In the new building, the data centre specialist wanted to optimally adapt the available work stations to the needs of the clients and, consequently, segment the capacities according to their wishes. eBRC was thus able to exploit all of the available capacity.

WHY CISCO?

eBRC decided to deploy IP telephony in the new building in order to be able to offer this high level of service. Thanks to the modularity of an IP telephone exchange, the company can segment its telephony according to the size of the client's user group. The necessary switches also allow eBRC to segment the IT network. This means that the entire capacity of the business resilience centre is totally modular and totally exploitable.

eBRC sat down with Netcore, a supplier of IP communication and telephony networks, to study which technology best met these demands. On the basis of the Magic Quadrant from Gartner, eBRC chose five possible product suppliers. eBRC then drew up specifications in order to clearly define its requirements and expectations to the various players. Its objective was twofold: convergence of the voice and data networks, on the one hand, and integration of IP telephony in the trading room, on the other.

Following a vast adjudication process, and after consulting its shareholder, P&T Luxembourg, eBRC chose the Cisco and IPTrade technology in mid 2006. The IP telephony equipment and network structure were already delivered and installed by September 2006. One month later, only eleven months after the launch of the project, the new Windhof data centre, close to the Belgian border, handed over the keys to its first client.





BACK TO WORK IN LESS THAN TWO HOURS

“The Cisco network technology met all our criteria as regards flexibility, modularity and reaction capacities. We have to be able to simultaneously welcome a variable number of employees sent by at least three clients and spread them over the 430 work stations on the Windhof site. Furthermore, these clients must be operational in two hours. In the event of a crisis, the technology cannot be an obstacle”, underlined Bernard Letellier, Project Manager and IT Manager with eBRC.

“The client companies under contract with eBRC vary considerably in size: from a few dozen employees to a staff of several hundred. That is why the system must be as modular as possible.

We have to be able to deploy the configuration within two hours. Thanks to the Cisco CallManagers, we manage the telephone exchange as a server and we effectively obtain a configuration in this time interval so that the client can quickly get back down to work again.”

“Each time we start working with a new client, they send us an Excel file with the profiles and the positions of the employees who will be hosted in our offices in the event of a catastrophe scenario. This list includes the surname, first name, IP address and telephone numbers of all the employees. Then, we regularly carry out tests. When the client arrives, we can easily activate this list, drawn up in advance thanks to the “bulk administration toolkit”, explains Chantal Walzer, Marketing & Business Development Manager with eBRC.

PRACTICAL AND USER-FRIENDLY FUNCTIONS

It goes without saying that a bank employing 200 persons will never send its entire workforce to eBRC in the event of an incident. Around a third of the employees can keep the business ticking over. Each of these employees therefore takes over three or four telephone numbers. The IP telephony system must therefore be easy to use and must in no way be a stumbling block. eBRC has therefore resolutely opted for the user-friendly Cisco IP telephones with integrated display. The names of the employees present are pre-programmed into the telephones and all they have to do is consult the address book. This means that employees quickly find the number of their colleagues in the same room.

TELEPHONE NETWORK SEPARATED PER CLIENT

eBRC has installed two CallManagers in the data centre to channel the telephone traffic. The multi-client concept of a CallManager allows eBRC to supply telephony to all the clients while keeping them separate. That is why four voice gateways, each linked to a Primary Rate Interface or PRI, have been installed. If more than four clients have to be hosted, eBRC can always add an additional gateway.

Thanks to the “group hunting” function, eBRC can now also host contact or call centres. In this case, the Cisco intelligent telephone exchange automatically looks for the right group of employees towards which the telephone calls must be transferred. Thanks to the convergence of the telephony and IT networks, the system managing the clients of the eBRC client can consult the caller’s file, allowing their query to be answered faster.





IT NETWORK DIVIDED VIRTUALLY

The eBRC IT network is segmented with Cisco switches into VLAN or virtual local networks. In this way, one client cannot access the network of another client. The local eBRC network is also separated. On its other sites, eBRC has to link each telephone physically to the PABX telephone exchanges. This meant installing a total of 10 PABX exchanges and very high maintenance costs. "By opting for IP telephony, we have been able to reduce the number of telephone exchanges, allowing us in turn to cut down on our maintenance costs. Segmentation also allows us to exploit all the available work places, whether the client needs 100 or 40 work stations," explains Bernard Letellier.

eBRC also provides its clients with mobile IP telephones (7921). In fact, each client today has one or several mobile employees to take care of the coordination of the department and who are therefore always on call. In order to ensure the connection with these mobile devices, eBRC has installed ten Cisco wireless antennae. They offer more flexibility to the business resilience centre than the DECT antennae used in the two other eBRC buildings. Indeed in Windhof it is easier to reconfigure the telephones on another gateway.

In future, eBRC intends to further adapt the Call-Managers to its own needs and to those of its clients. "Today, we are already working very quickly with a configuration of less than two hours.

We want to integrate a sort of automatic function into the Call Manager that allows us to activate our clients' pre-programmed configurations at a click of a button. We can thus speed things up further and allow our clients to be operational faster. We are currently drawing up a programme along these lines in cooperation with Cisco.

This development will further enhance our flexibility", boasts Bernard Letellier.

