

Borderless Network Boosts Logistics Business's Flexibility



Technology Will Allow Broekman Group to Deploy Wireless Networking and Unified Communications Applications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Broekman Group

Industry: Logistics

Location: Netherlands

Number of Employees: 1000

Business Challenge:

- Corporate takeovers lead to aging and mixed platforms which lead to network performance issues.
- Requirement to improve workforce flexibility for on-site workers
- Desire to turn the network into a productivity enablement platform for the business

Network Solution:

- Borderless network foundation to support new services
- Five-year services package to assure network integrity
- Zero percent financing to minimize capital expenditure

Business Results:

- Improved productivity by helping workers communicate and work more effectively
- Enhanced mobility to keep workers productive wherever they are.
- Better collaboration through instant messaging, phone calls, or videoconferencing

Business Challenge

Rotterdam, Netherlands-based Broekman Group is a 51-year-old, EUR€250 million-turnover logistics company with around 1000 employees spread across sites throughout Europe and Asia.

The group is made up of four operating subsidiaries, concerned with shipping, logistics, automotive, and special products such as packed chemicals, high quality steel or non-containerized goods, plus a corporate division that provides IT, finance, and human resources support to the others.

The corporate division typically upgrades its IT systems every five to seven years and by 2010 was due for a refresh. "We wanted to get rid of performance issues," states Broekman's general manager Martijn Hendriks.

Aging equipment and a mix of legacy platforms from corporate takeovers were conspiring to create bottlenecks in the network and preventing the company from deploying tools that could enhance the productivity of its people.

Specifically, Broekman's management had recognized the need for a new data center and a network infrastructure that would allow it to provide Wi-Fi networking to its office-based staff (at the time wireless was only deployed in warehouses) and unified communications.

The group was also planning to move to a new corporate headquarters at the Portcity complex in Rotterdam, so it made sense to tie this in with the network overhaul.

In the second half of 2010, Broekman began talking to its IT services provider, the Dutch systems integrator Issue Information Technology, about its technology requirements.

Ed Henzel, manager of solutions and professional services at Issue Information Technology, says: "We saw Broekman was keen to use technology to transform its business and we realized the best option would be to get Cisco involved directly in the discussions in order to outline its architecture vision."





“WE IMMEDIATELY BOUGHT INTO THE BORDERLESS NETWORKS ARCHITECTURE. IT MEANS WE CAN GROW AS A COMPANY FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEARS.”

First and Last Name: Martijn Hendriks
Job Title: General manager
Company Name: Broekman Group

Network Solution

Issue Information Technology got Cisco® involved in the discussions with Broekman in early November 2010.

The Cisco team was convinced an end-to-end architecture approach would suit Broekman’s needs better than a series of point products, and held meetings with the logistics company’s management to present the vision and strategy around Cisco’s borderless networks and collaboration architectures.

Broekman’s top team was already impressed with the performance of its existing Cisco equipment and immediately bought into the advantages of a borderless network architecture.

“We have had an excellent experience over the last few years with Cisco; its technologies are very stable,” says Broekman’s general manager, Martijn Hendriks. “We have experience with other vendors and they have had much more problems with switches over the last few years.

“Other vendors were less capable—Cisco stood out because of its architecture approach. The borderless networks architecture was quite important because we feel we have to take steps to support our business needs.”

In the event, Issue Information Technology and Cisco proposed an architecture encompassing core, edge, and wireless network components, plus security.

“This was a major architecture deployment and installing the network in the new office was a key part of installing the total IT environment within a tight schedule, so it was essential for us to work closely with Cisco,” says Ed Henzel of Issue Information Technology.

Two Cisco Catalyst 6506 platforms make up the core of the network and Catalyst 3750-X switches provide the access layer.

Wi-Fi connectivity is via a Cisco 5508 series wireless controller and Cisco Aironet® 1142 series 802.11 a/g/n access points, designed for simple deployment and energy efficiency while offering at least six times the throughput of existing 802.11a/g networks.

Security, meanwhile, is provided by two ASA 5540 Adaptive Security Appliances, a core component of borderless networks that provide context-aware firewall capabilities, comprehensive real-time threat defense, effective, always-on, highly secure remote access, and highly secure communication services.

Complementing this is a Cisco IronPort® Email Security appliance, to minimize the downtime associated with email-borne malware, and two IronPort S160 Web Security appliances, which provides advanced tools including acceptable-use-policy controls, reputation filtering, malware filtering, and data security.

Broekman also purchased five year’s worth of SMARTnet® cover, giving it:

- Global 24-hour access to the Cisco Technical Assistance Center.
- Access to an online knowledge base, communities, and tools.
- Two-hour, four-hour, and next business day hardware replacement options.
- Operating system software updates.
- Smart, proactive diagnostics and real-time alerts on devices enabled with Smart Call Home.

The decision to take out SMARTnet cover for a full five years was driven by Broekman’s upgrade cycles. Martijn Hendriks explains: “We generally invest in new equipment every five years so this period of cover meant our operations would be assured until it is time for us to upgrade again. It is a financial thing.”

Finally, Broekman also took advantage of zero percent EasyLease financing from Cisco Capital® to fund the whole upgrade. This allowed it to treat the investment as an operational expense and preserve its capital expenditure budget for other items. “It enables us to invest in other things,” says Martijn Hendriks. “It has given us space to invest in other areas, dedicating money to things that make money.”



Business Results

The implementation of the borderless networks architecture has so far progressed smoothly and is achieving its objective of solving Broekman's capacity and legacy equipment constraints while providing a platform for the implementation of Cisco Unified Communications Manager technology which will:

- Simplify voice systems to cut costs and dramatically streamline provisioning and maintenance.
- Extend video capabilities to employees through a single, unified communications infrastructure.
- Build productivity by helping workers communicate and work more effectively.
- Enable mobility with embedded unified mobility software capabilities to keep workers productive wherever they are.
- Improve collaboration through instant messaging, phone calls, or videoconferencing.

The architecture is also improving the productivity and flexibility of the company's workforce by allowing office employees to work wirelessly.

Broekman expects to be able to integrate a wider range of wireless devices into its network, so employees can have the freedom to work with Blackberry Playbooks or other productivity-enhancing tools. And the company is looking into saving costs by routing mobile phone calls over the wireless network, using fixed-mobile convergence.

Another potential money-saving application is Cisco EnergyWise, a built-in feature of the Cisco IOS® software running on Broekman's Catalyst switches that could allow the company to monitor and control the energy use of all the power-over-Ethernet devices connected to the network, plus desktop and laptop PCs.

"One of the benefits of the Cisco architectural approach is that it allows our customers to achieve a range of valuable business outcomes in one go," says Ed Henzel. "This greatly enhances the value and return on investment of the technology."

And all of this is with the assurance of SMARTnet cover and the flexibility of a zero-percent financing package. "Cisco and Issue Information Technology are helping to transform our business," says Martijn Hendriks. "Their work means we can grow as a company for the forthcoming years."

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco borderless networks architecture go to:

www.cisco.com/go/borderless

To find out more about the Cisco SMARTnet go to:

www.cisco.com/en/US/partner/products/svcs/ps3034/ps2827/ps2978/serv_group_home.html

To find out more about Broekman Group go to:

www.broekman-group.com

Product and Services List

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst 3750-X switches
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 switches
- Cisco Catalyst 10G network modules
- Cisco 10GBASE SFP+ network modules

Network Management

- Cisco LAN Management Solution

Security and VPN

- Cisco ASA 5540 Adaptive Security Appliances
- Cisco IronPort email and Web security bundles

Wireless

- Cisco 5508 Series wireless controller
- Cisco Aironet 1142 802.11 a/g/n access points'

Services

- Cisco SMARTnet

