



Service Provider Strengthens Margins and Enhances Customer Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IP INFRASTRUCTURES LIMITED (IPI)

- Network Service Provider
- Wakefield, UK
- 45 employees

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Increase efficiency of service provisioning
- Reduce complexity of network trouble shooting
- Help ensure customers receive timely resolution to network support calls

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Provisioning and diagnostics solutions provide error-free VPN configurations and automated trouble shooting capabilities

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Reduce provisioning times by 70 percent
- Provide rapid troubleshooting, and eliminating errors from services
- Reduce operational expenditure
- Increase customer satisfaction

Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and MPLS Diagnostic Expert allow IPI to automate service creation and help desk functions.

Business Challenge

IP Infrastructures Limited (IPI) was formed through a management buyout in 2003, and has been profitable from the start. Along the way, the company has made the transition from systems integrator to network service provider and security specialist. During the four years that it has been trading, IPI has seen its annual revenues grow fourfold to their current level of £8 million, while its staff complement has increased from the original 16 up to 45 people.

Today the company provides end-to-end global MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) secure

networked IT services solutions for customers including Sanctuary Housing Association, Vinci, and Manheim.

“The choice of Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert is enabling us to standardise our service offerings, grow our business in a more controlled fashion, and deliver best-in-class customer support.”

—Jonathan Mayo, Managing Director, IPI

IPI has an impeccable reputation for service, delivery, and support; and offers one of the most secure and advanced global next-generation networks available to UK-based companies today. In striving to help ensure that its customers get the best value and most reliable networked IT services solutions – and that their data remains inviolate – IPI works in partnership with major players such as BT and Cisco®.

Jonathan Mayo, Managing Director at IPI, says: “We have an impeccable reputation for service, delivery, and support; with one of the most secure and advanced global next generation network available to UK-based companies today. We strive to ensure that our customers get the best value and most reliable networked IT services solutions.”

The IPI business model had evolved through significant dependence upon senior Cisco-accredited engineers, who are highly qualified and able to demand upper-quartile salaries. “There was a direct relationship between business volumes and the number of senior engineers we had to employ,” says Peter Edwards, technical director at IPI. “We had to find a way to decouple those things, so that we could grow our revenues while controlling our cost base at the same time.”

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Network Solution

Cisco introduced IPI to its IP Solution Center software suite. Aimed directly at supporting service providers and major enterprises in next generation network environments, the Cisco IP Solution Center product family delivers a comprehensive range of automated network management modules. Cisco IP Solution Center is available as a complete solution or as individual applications.

IPI chose to adopt Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert. “The Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert applications offered us the potential to transform our service creation and help desk functions, to continuously and proportionately reduce our dependence upon high-level skills for routine tasks,” says Edwards.

Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert provides IPI with automated workflow-based troubleshooting and diagnostic capabilities, and enables automated in-depth MPLS VPN access, edge, and core fault diagnosis. Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning allows automated end-to-end service activation for Level 2 and Level 3 MPLS VPN products.

“IPI made a strategic investment in our industry-leading MPLS management products,” says Steve Nye, vice president and general manager of Service Provider Network Management at Cisco. “By capturing the skills and experience of our CCIEs [Cisco Certified Internetwork Experts] around the globe and using artificial intelligence techniques, the Cisco MPLS Diagnostic Expert brings the unique capability to identify and recommend corrective actions for faults across the network more quickly than ever before. In combination with Cisco IP Solutions Centre Provisioning, which allows service providers to propagate error-free VPN configurations throughout any size network, it puts IPI in a position to deliver world-class MPLS-based services to any and all of its customers.”

The relationship between IPI and BT operates on many levels. As a Cisco Gold Partner, BT iNet is a supplier to IPI of Cisco hardware and software. BT Wholesale provides significant elements of the IPI customer-facing infrastructure including global MPLS network capability.

“I estimate that we’re looking at a return on investment within two years. But that’s aside from unquantifiable factors such as the competitive edge we are getting and the beneficial effects of vastly improved customer service. I think it’s the best money we’ve ever spent – and it helps me sleep too.”

—Peter Edwards, Technical Director, IPI

Ann-Marie Taggart, the BT service provider account manager, says: “We try where possible to facilitate collaborative relationships between our customers, suppliers, and partners, whether that’s for infrastructure, hardware, applications, or fully converged managed solutions. IPI is an exciting and dynamic business, and we are keen to continue to work with IPI to foster and exploit new technology that allows IPI to maintain its competitive edge through excellent customer service.” Edwards adds: “BT provides us with invaluable assistance in new converged technologies such as voice over IP. I believe that BT is a world leader in such areas.”

Implementation assistance to IPI was provided by Harbrook Consultants, independent specialists in the management of communications networks. With in-depth experience of Cisco IP Solution Center and MPLS Diagnostics Expert implementations around the world – Harbrook was best positioned to assist IPI in rapidly bringing these applications to operational readiness.

“The experience of the Harbrook people was invaluable and helped us to much more quickly realise a return on the investment,” says Edwards. “Equally importantly, their knowledge of other Cisco IP Solution Center and Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert implementations offered reassurance to our engineering people.”

Business Result

The implementation of Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and MPLS Diagnostics Expert has allowed IPI to create services that are more straightforward to sell and implement while improving customer support – and all at reduced cost. In terms of service creation, IPI has adopted ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library) best practice processes and, by automating repetitive manual activities through the use of validated templates, Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning is not only speeding up service delivery but is also eliminating human error from the equation.

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Edwards provides an example of the power of that approach: “In concert with changes in our procurement policy, we have recently transitioned 850 VPN sites,” he says. “That task was accomplished error-free and without a single outage or service issue.”

Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning provides that sort of accuracy by, for example, making it virtually impossible for people to do something that would prejudice service. Prior to the implementation of Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning the migration would have taken IPI many times longer and would inevitably have resulted in customer-affecting faults.

“It is impossible to put a value on that sort of integrity,” says Edwards, “but with both of these Cisco products, we have also reduced our provisioning times by at least 70 percent into the bargain.”

At the interface with existing customers and their networks, Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert is proving to be a similar revelation. The fact that it brings to bear the fault diagnosis skills and knowledge of CCIEs from around the world – and offers that learning automatically through a user-friendly GUI (graphical user interface) – is resulting in fault diagnoses that are at least ten times faster than manual intervention.

“Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert is simply an awesome product,” says Edwards. “Since we implemented it, we have been able to amaze our customers by fixing problems literally while they’re on the phone. Whereas in the past, trouble tickets would take hours to resolve, that time is being reduced to minutes. Furthermore, Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert has a crucial role as a verification tool in the provisioning process, by enabling end-to-end testing of VPN connections before release to the customer.”

In financial terms, Edwards points to savings in recruitment, elimination of wasted engineering visits, streamlined and automated processes, and the opportunity costs provided by better utilisation of its senior engineering staff. He says: “Taking the tangible things into consideration, I estimate that we’re looking at a return on investment within two years. But that’s aside from unquantifiable factors such as the competitive edge we get and the beneficial effects of vastly improved customer service. I think it’s the best money we’ve ever spent – and it helps me sleep too.”

Senior IPI engineers have become committed advocates of the Cisco IP Solution Center implementation too: not only because they have witnessed the transformational impact on IPI customer service, but also because they have experienced strongly positive effects on their work life balance.

Jonathan Mayo, managing director at IPI, sums up: “The choice of Cisco IP Solution Center Provisioning and Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert is enabling us to standardise our service offerings, grow our business in a more controlled fashion, and deliver best-in-class customer support.”

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco MPLS Diagnostics Expert and Cisco IP Solution Center, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/mde> and <http://www.cisco.com/go/isc>, respectively.



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