

HIGHLIGHTS

Rapidly expanding community marketplace for people and business to outsource tasks, find local services and hire flexible staff online

Secure and intuitive cloud-managed solutions from Cisco's SMB portfolio, Cisco Start

Enable disparate teams of remote and mobile workers to focus on maximising profits without significant investment



CLOUD-MANAGED SOLUTION



Security Appliance Series
- MX 100



Access point
- MR34

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Want simple, secure and smart solutions for your business?

When Airtasker outgrew their shared office space, they needed to choose an IT solution that would keep a fluid and ambitious team connected and productive. But they also wanted something they could 'set & forget', so they wouldn't have to invest heavily in an IT team, spend vital hours offline or troubleshoot networking issues.

Airtasker turned to Cisco to implement secure and reliable, cloud managed solutions from its dedicated Small and Medium Business portfolio, Cisco Start - enterprise-class technology made for small and medium sized businesses. More importantly, what that technology has allowed Airtasker to do in the last five years is take advantage of a hyper-growth period; growing their footprint, workforce and maximising profits, rather than focusing energy on the IT behind the business.

THE CHALLENGE

Airtasker is Australia's largest online marketplace for odd-jobs. If you need a job done, you can find someone on Airtasker to do it. Handyman, gardener, cleaner, removalist, IT support, delivery, whatever. You just use your phone or computer to post a job, then choose the best offer.

Since their launch in 2012, Airtasker has experienced rapid growth. They now serve over a million customers, and facilitate more than \$75 million worth of tasks every year. Over the last five years, they've gone from just 10 employees in a shared office space to more than 70 people and their own dedicated Sydney office. Many of their staff also work remotely, so secure, efficient, hassle-free communication and collaboration are essential to day-to-day operations.

What's more, Airtasker operates solely in the cloud - they don't house a single on-premise server. So, in the words of Airtasker's Chief Technology Officer, Paul Keen, "Put quite simply, without a network the whole office is unable to function and we don't have a business."

The more the company grew, the more of a challenge day-to-day operations started to become. Despite their rapid growth, they were still a pretty small company, in the grand scheme of things; they didn't have a specialist networking team in-house and - more to the point - they didn't want one. They wanted to remain as agile as they'd always been, so everyone could remain focused on innovation and responding immediately to customer feedback.

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- Paul Keen, Chief Technology Officer, Airtasker

The last thing they wanted to worry about was their network going down for several hours.

According to Paul Keen, "Networking should be like electricity, it's incredibly important but you

don't want to spend any time focussing on it." So when Airtasker inevitably outgrew its shared space, and went in search of dedicated offices, they also began the search for a complete cloud managed solution.

THE SOLUTION

Airtasker's co-working space, Tank Stream Labs, had used Cisco Meraki - part of the Cisco Start portfolio designed for SMBs - to enable its disparate teams of remote and mobile workers. Airtasker had always found it trouble-free, secure and intuitive, so it was definitely at the top of their shortlist when comparing prospective networking solutions of their own. And after a period of due-diligence, it came out the clear winner:

"We'd been using Cisco Meraki for the last three years, and never had a problem with it," said Paul Keen, "which is something I definitely can't say for other solutions I've used! When we investigated the alternatives, we quickly found that there was nothing out there that came even remotely close to it."

Paul also found it easy to set up: "All it took was a couple of hours to get up and running; they send out a professional to get you set up, and by mid-morning, you're good to go."

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Perhaps more importantly, ongoing operation and adaptation is equally as easy. "It's always worth having the professionals around to help you set up - especially when it comes to security - however with just a little bit of up-front support, maintenance has been so simple we can do it internally."

Without employing any additional IT resources, the Airtasker team was able to continue their headcount growth with no more than an hour of downtime over the first year of operation.

"I love the web interface," said Paul Keen. "It's so simple and it just works. I don't need a technician to go into the boxes, which means that on the odd occasions when we've lost the internet, we can pinpoint the problem very quickly - usually straight from our dashboard. Similarly, if we need to make firewall configuration changes, we don't need someone to come in; it's very intuitive for us to just log into the system and make those small changes ourselves."

Security has also become just as important to Airtasker as their network in recent years with the ever-increasing threat of cyber attacks. "People are people. We're all capable of making mistakes," admitted Paul Keen. "Without the right security in place, all it takes is one person to click a bad link, and your servers and data are compromised. You're the latest ransomware victim. We sidestepped that risk altogether by simply eliminating the management and monitoring servers. We have none in our office at all. Instead, we have hundreds of managed servers in our Cisco Meraki cloud stack, and we leave the security to Cisco, because they specialise in it."

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- Paul Keen, Chief Technology Officer, Airtasker

Airtasker was able to achieve their goals without having to invest in expensive physical security, digital security or security expertise. Nor did they have to invest time and capital into disaster recovery and business continuity solutions.

THE OUTCOME

Thanks to the intuitive cloud managed offering from the Cisco Start portfolio, Airtasker was able to focus on its core business and maximising profits, even while continuing to expand at a rapid rate. According to Paul Keen, "when you're in this hyper-growth cycle, you want to be able to focus on

the stuff that helps the customer and the business, you don't want to be constantly distracted and constrained by growing pains. Cisco Meraki has proven to be exactly the networking solution we needed. It supports our teams, rather than blocking them or making things complicated, and it lets us get on with the job with the same confidence and responsiveness as always."

FUTURE

Over the coming 12 months, Airtasker plans to further leverage Cisco's capabilities. "Soon after we implemented Cisco Meraki, I noticed that everything was starting to integrate with it" explained Paul Keen. "You don't expect to see your technology partner integrate so seamlessly with third-party software. There's a large eco-system starting to build around Cisco Meraki, which is extremely progressive, so we're going to take things a little bit further."

The company plans to integrate third party virtual receptionist software using Cisco Meraki's API, which will provide each user with their own dedicated virtual receptionist. They also plan to enable individual WiFi connections for each employee, each with its own unique password for enhanced security.

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- Paul Keen, Chief Technology Officer, Airtasker

FINAL WORDS

"We needed a network that was truly 'set and forget', so we could focus entirely on agile innovation. And that's exactly what we got. Cisco Start portfolio offers a number of solutions that are ideal for SMBs out there; whether you're starting out or trying to digitise in the face of rapid growth, the solution grows with you. We truly believe that IT should be the enabler rather than the roadblock of any company and that's exactly what we have achieved with Cisco's help," concluded Paul Keen, Chief Technology Officer.