

ASG Improves Customer Support with Nextgen VPLS



ASG increases bandwidth and flexibility of its national data management while reducing costs and operational resource requirements with Nextgen Networks' award-winning VPLS product.

"Nextgen's VPLS solution allows us to easily and securely connect our customers to the core network. We benefit greatly from easy scalability of bandwidth requirements and rapid deployment of changes, upgrades or new technologies as well as improved disaster recovery capability, continuity of service and mitigation of risks against technology failure."

Martin Coleman,
Internal IT Manager, ASG

ASG Customer Profile:

Industry: IT services

Size: Five locations – 600-plus staff – 150-plus customers

Snapshot: ASG provides national IT infrastructure and application management services to a broad range of small, medium and large public and private enterprises.

Objective:

Managed services provider ASG was looking to improve the quality of customer support it provides by enhancing its national data carriage with additional flexibility, scalability, reliability and reduced costs.

Approach:

ASG implemented a Nextgen Networks VPLS solution that leverages Australia's third largest national fibre network to deliver highly flexible, manageable, secure and feature-rich Ethernet VPN services to its broad range of corporate and Government customers.

Cost reductions, efficiency improvements:

Since ASG implemented its Nextgen VPLS solution, there have been a range of cost reduction and efficiency benefits that are contributing to better bottom line performance for the business according to Mr Martin Coleman, Internal IT Manager for ASG.

"We have obtained higher bandwidth at each office for a lower overall annual cost for data transfer than we were paying previously," Mr Coleman said. "I would estimate that it represents a cost reduction of about 20 per cent and then there are additional savings in reduced phone bills because we no longer have to use public networks for internal voice communications."

"Being able to bring our customers into the core network is also a major benefit for us. We no longer have to bring them in on an Internet VPN, or create a whole new frame relay connection or DSL connection to get them in. Now we can just bring them into the cloud."

IT Improvements:

- Layer 2 VPN connectivity allows for self management of changes and new connections making it easy to bring on new clients or sites
- Self management of Quality of Service (QoS) makes it easier to guarantee performance of critical applications
- Increased bandwidth between all ASG offices allowing for deployment of new applications such as VoIP
- Substantial ability to scale up bandwidth requirements in future
- Rapid deployment capability for changes and new sites or technologies
- Full redundancy, enhanced continuity of services and improved disaster recovery capability

Business Benefits:

- Reduced cost of carrier data services by around 20 per cent
- Reduced phone bills through direct voice connections between offices
- Operational efficiencies from the elimination of reliability on carrier for changes and new connections
- Higher bandwidth between offices and client sites to support enhanced business processes
- Secure infrastructure which allows the company to continue to grow customer base and range of services
- Mitigation of business and contractual risks from unavailability of systems

About ASG:

ASG is a national IT managed services provider with offices in Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. ASG is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange and has over 150 medium to large, public and private enterprise customers, who are serviced by in excess of 600 staff nationally.

It champions flexibility, agility and decisiveness through ICT innovation that makes a difference in its clients' IT and business environment. Services provided by ASG include IT outsourcing, solutions consulting, IT infrastructure management, application development, systems integration and the provision of specialist technical services and support.

Sustaining profitable growth:

In order to sustain rapid growth, ASG came to recognise the restraints of the MPLS national data carriage services it was using to connect offices and customers all over Australia. According to Mr Martin Coleman, ASG's Internal IT Manager, the company was faced with bandwidth constraints, rising costs and inflexibility of service.



“We are based in Perth but our offices on the east coast have grown substantially in recent years,” Mr Coleman said. “Quite simply, we needed more bandwidth. At the core of achieving identified objectives for improved communications and security was the need to provide increased bandwidth now and into the future.”

“We also wanted much more flexibility and the ability to have control over our own bandwidth utilisation. On the legacy MPLS service, changes were slow to implement and additional charges were incurred for VLAN changes. Our costs were increasing and relying on the carrier to effect changes was slowing down our ability to remain nimble in the market place.”

Nextgen VPLS

Managing bandwidth costs:

The cost of additional bandwidth and flexibility of service levels was a major consideration when ASG tendered for a new solution. Remaining competitive on price and service levels was vital to ASG's ability to continue profitable growth.

ASG's core business model is based around providing national customers with longer-term service agreements to manage infrastructure and more recently to manage applications around the Oracle portfolio of products.

"We needed a way to be able to expand our network reach for these clients but to do so in a secure, cost-effective and flexible manner," Mr Coleman said. "Part of our growth objectives involved expanding the number of customers we service but also to expand the range of services that we supply including fully managed network services."

Nextgen VPLS proves to be the best fit:

Having assessed a broad range of options, ASG selected Nextgen as the carrier of choice to help it achieve its technical and business objectives. It now utilises the Nextgen national fibre network as well as its feature-rich VPLS product which offers Layer 2 VPN capability.

"We are a technical company and the capabilities of the VPLS product were a clear standout over the competition," Mr Coleman said. "The price of utilising Nextgen's national network was enough to get them over the line so the additional rich-networking features and flexible self management capabilities that came with the solution are a real bonus."

"All of our four main offices around the country and our data centre in Perth are now on fibre tails linking directly to Nextgen's fibre network. We now push our data straight out into the Nextgen VPLS network through new routers that handle the higher data transfer speeds and allow us to apply the latest Quality of Service, traffic profiling technology."

"Now when we bring on new customer sites, we are simply extending the Nextgen VPLS cloud. We are putting a fibre tail to the site, implementing our firewall on the customer site and then keying into the network for management purposes. This works out to be far more secure and cost-effective for the customer."

High quality national fibre network:

The breadth and quality of the Nextgen national VPLS network has been a revelation to ASG according to Mr Coleman. All of its offices and customers have been connected directly to fibre links with ease. It allows for Perth to be a gateway to the nation and the world rather than just being at the tail end of the network.

Additional bandwidth has allowed ASG to have guaranteed and partitioned Quality of Service across Australia for specific applications, which was critical in configuring the VPLS solution to manage dedicated voice channels between each office.

"We have all our PABX's linked and the voice data flows very well between them," Mr. Coleman said. "We also now have the capability and capacity to push video traffic down those links in the future and these are new types of services that we can also start offering to our customers."

"We now feel much more confident about our ability to implement networks and applications and then proactively manage them."

Self-managing Quality of Service:

ASG has new capability to self-manage Quality of Service and other configuration changes which is a significant part of its customer support operations.

"We undertake a reasonable amount of work bringing new customers on or changing access authentications and such things," Mr Coleman said. "Inherent flexibility of the network means that we don't have to go to the provider to worry about QoS or additional V-LANs."

"That has made our life much easier and reduced our management overheads significantly. With Nextgen VPLS, we have been able to prioritise voice traffic over our core network and we are now starting to bring some of our clients' sites into the network as well."

"We see tremendous benefits from the VPLS solution going forward as it allows us to complete that whole process very easily, quickly and securely."

Mitigating risk through full redundancy:

ASG's ability to offer full redundancy of its own network and for customers is another area where Mr Coleman sees the organisation is better able to support its customer base through risk mitigation.

"Should there ever be an issue with a particular ASG office, we can still provide support to individual customers through another office because they are no longer reliant upon a single point-to-point link," Mr Coleman said. "For example, if we lost our Sydney office because of a power failure, we can still access customer sites they manage from any other point in the network."

"With the previous solution we used, essentially we would have been out of action under such circumstances and under some contractual agreements there would be potentially damaging penalties incurred."

Bandwidth galore:

Having the ability to scale up bandwidth as required is supporting an ASG stated business objective of sustained, profitable growth in customer base and service offerings.

"Because we are on a fibre connection, we can crank up the bandwidth quickly and easily which was not possible on DSL, frame relay or other technologies," Mr Coleman said. "Our enhanced ability to connect new customer sites means we can provide redundant connections as well and we have already extended our service to one large customer in this area."

Martin Coleman is the Internal IT Manager at ASG. He can be contacted via: Martin.Coleman@asggroup.com.au

"This particular customer is a government department which is now setting up a second data centre, both of which will be connected to ASG via the Nextgen VPLS cloud. There will be full redundancy access should either of the network links go out."

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ABOUT NEXTGEN NETWORKS:

Nextgen Networks is a specialist provider of high performance data services and solutions. A member of the Leighton Group, Nextgen Networks owns and operates Australia's third largest fibre optic network and Australia's first national VPLS network. Its customers include managed network service providers, network integrators, carriers, corporations and government agencies.

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