

Connecting branches



About Fountains

Fountains was originally established as a forestry management operation in South West England in 1957 trading under the name of Fountain Forestry. The forestry management base grew substantially during the 1970s with further operations in England, Wales and Scotland.

By 1980 the forestry management operations had been extended to North East USA. During the '90s, operations diversified substantially outside of forestry. Specialist vegetation management contracts for the utilities and transport industries began, followed by substantial contracts within the grounds maintenance sector.

Through new contract wins, the company has built upon its traditional core services to offer all of its customers a more complete approach through a framework of consultancy, project management and technical delivery skills. Over the years it became evident that customers constantly seek efficiencies to compete in their own core markets, procuring more services through a reduced number of suppliers. To support this, Fountains offers customers a model of a single source, managed services provider.

The challenges

Fountains operates out of 20 offices and depots nationwide, from Exeter to Inverness, and its headquarters (HQ) is based in Banbury, Oxfordshire. With such widely distributed satellite offices, Fountains needed a network solution that would connect them all to the HQ and thereby enable coordinated control of the entire operation.

Up until early this year, the organisation had a bespoke system in place which was hosted in Banbury. As the company grew, Fountains wanted a solution that was scalable and would grow with them but the existing system was unable to support this expansion. What's more, if there was ever any network downtime in Banbury, not only could this be costly to the company in terms of lost productivity, all of the additional sites would not be able to access the files, emails or accounts until the network was fixed and the problem was solved.

Rather than waiting for this to happen, however, Fountain's strategy centred on taking preventative measures. Therefore, in order to safeguard the business, its main priority was to ensure there was never any downtime. This meant it needed to increase network stability, and to have flexibility and redundancy in the network reinforced by faster response time and round the clock support.

With thorough assessment and guidance from Claranet, Fountains has implemented a fully outsourced, managed service network.

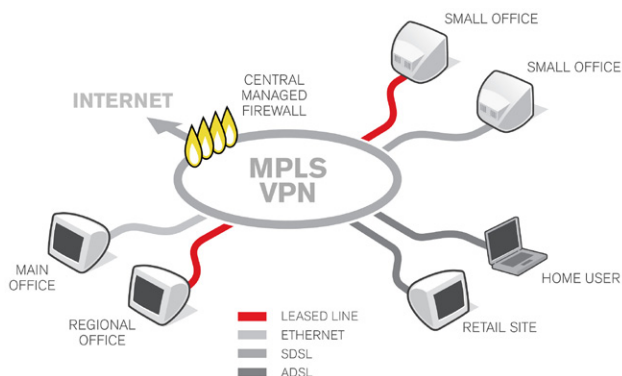
The solution

Claranet worked closely with Fountains to design, implement and manage a system that was guaranteed to meet all of its needs and requirements, and that would enable them to maximise the intelligence held within the organisation.



Focusing on the many satellite offices in the UK, a key element of the project was to integrate each system seamlessly, and enable the sharing of information without the need to travel or manually send documents and files when requested. Furthermore, with many employees spending the majority of their time out on the road, travelling to and from sites or different offices, a Virtual Private Network (VPN) with increased security was implemented to allow mobile and home working.

With the multiple types of traffic co-existing on the same MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switching) network, the solution enables more efficient management and monitoring of traffic, faster restoration after a failure and higher performance. Also, eliminating the need for firewalls at each satellite office removed another point of failure and increased the stability of the network.



It is estimated that 63 per cent of companies would not survive after two weeks downtime, so Fountains has taken steps towards protecting the business in the unlikely event that it should be hit with a similar situation. An additional, but integral, part of the network refresh was to create a disaster recovery site in London so that if the network was to suffer long periods of outage, the business could keep functioning unaffected. This is due to be up and running by September this year (2008).

The result

While the new network infrastructure has only been live for just under three months, Fountains is already reaping the benefits of the system. Claranet has ensured that all sites have upgraded to the fastest ADSL connection possible, supporting remote access to files and the Intranet, and promoting better communication.

Employees can now benefit from working at home and cut down on the time dedicated to travelling from location to location. This has not only reduced associated travel costs, but has also reduced the organisation's carbon footprint - which was increasing due to the amount of commuting previously required. In line with this social responsibility initiative, the new systems allow the UK offices to better communicate with the US office via video conference calls (VCC) - something the old network was unable to handle.

Darren Williams, IT Co-ordinator at Fountains, commented: "Following rigorous due diligence and reviews of different suppliers, Claranet came highly recommended and was the supplier of choice for this project. Right from the start they were approachable and accommodating, listening to our requirements and answering any questions we had. They always responded positively, constantly looking for new and innovative ways to deliver a cost-effective solution that could grow with the organisation."

For further information, please visit :

www.fountainsplc.com

www.clara.net