

Virtualized networks from AT&T Business

empower collaboration at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and
facilitate business growth for its clients

- **Business needs** - Globally dispersed business development agency required more ways for staff to work with one another and with other New Zealand businesses seeking to expand—all in a highly reliable and highly secure network setting.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Software-Defined Wide Area Networking (SD-WAN) provides highly secure connectivity for the agency's global staff, promoting communication and facilitating business development.
- **Business value** - Highly secure connectivity, high reliability, reduced cost and complexity, simplified network management.
- **Industry focus** - Government business development agency
- **Size** - Staff of 700 working in 50 locations across 30 countries

About New Zealand Trade and Enterprise

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) is a government agency charged with helping New Zealand businesses expand globally. It provides custom services and support to companies looking to build capability, boost global reach, and connect to other businesses. NZTE also connects international and domestic investors with opportunities in New Zealand.

The situation

NZTE staff worked from 50 offices across 30 countries, which meant relying on email, phone calls, and video conferencing to connect. Collaboration was often hampered because the organization's hub-and-spoke network was unreliable and didn't deliver the services and performance staff required. Video conferencing was especially problematic. Bandwidth issues meant calls were often dropped and callers regularly experienced video and audio difficulties. NZTE needed a network optimized for the future to enable staff to more effectively support clients.

Solution

NZTE chose AT&T Software-Defined Wide Area Networking (SD-WAN) with VMware devices to provide highly secure connectivity for its global staff. Software-defined networking enables the agency to build high-performance systems using cost-effective, commercially available broadband links. The solution also includes AT&T Dedicated Internet service.



Pursuing a world of opportunities

NZTE is New Zealand's international business development agency. It exists for one purpose—to grow the nation's businesses internationally—bigger, better, and faster—for the good of New Zealand.

For more than 50 years NZTE has helped New Zealand companies to expand and export products and services internationally and has worked to encourage outsiders to invest in New Zealand. Aaron Evans, NZTE's Director of Digital Operations, said the agency is tasked with bringing in \$5 billion annually to the New Zealand GDP. "We find the places that need investments in New Zealand and try to match them with overseas people that have money," he said.

Staff take the agency's mission very seriously. "We don't work for an organization. We work for a cause, and the

cause is to benefit New Zealand," Evans said. "That's a very powerful thing to get behind, and it makes me very proud to work for this organization."

The agency employs about 700 people in 50 offices who work across 30 time zones and 40 languages to support New Zealand businesses in over 100 countries. About half the employees work in New Zealand and half offshore, in places as far flung as China, the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Dubai.

A mandate to improve IT

With its staff so dispersed, NZTE struggled to support employees' communication needs. The organization's legacy infrastructure was unable to deliver the services staff needed. As a result, employees consistently complained and gave the IT staff negative ratings.

"People just weren't happy with IT, and for good reason," Evans said. "The services weren't working for our people. If you were offshore, the experience was terrible. We didn't have great customer service. Our equipment was slow, it didn't work, and it was driving our people insane. So we set about turning that around."

Evans was an experienced IT executive who had managed network operations and security for the nation's power grid before he was recruited to NZTE. The job interested him because it aligned with his interests and expertise.

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Aaron Evans

Director of Digital Operations, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise

"I have three main passions: technology, security, and people management," he said. "I like growing teams. My preference is not to work for the man just for the money. I'd much rather work for a cause, and this opportunity resonated with me. There was a lot of work to do, and it was quite exciting work, so I jumped into it."

Ready, rock-solid, and stable

The agency tried for years to fix its infrastructure, to no avail. "There was a project called 'Get IT Right' that took a lot of money but was a bit of a failure," Evans said. "It was very clear that what we were doing with IT wasn't working, and we needed to change the game."

Evans recognized that NZTE could benefit from a cloud-based solution. "We needed to replace pretty much everything—network circuits and all of the traditional IT equipment—and get it ready, rock solid, and stable," he said.

He developed a plan to replace and upgrade the company's global internet and aging network video conferencing platform. "As you can imagine with a company so dispersed, video conferencing was causing us a lot of pain," Evans said. "But there was little point putting that in until we had the foundation sorted out."



The agency's leaders made getting a new solution a top priority after they traveled to NZTE offshore sites and saw firsthand the problems with networking and video conferencing. "They were very clear with me on two things: sort out the network and fix the video conferencing," Evans said. "Everyone was desperate for IT to operate correctly, so we had the mandate."

A streamlined solution

NZTE decided to change its philosophy as it began overhauling the infrastructure, streamlining the number of vendors with which the agency worked, and eliminating the vendor-customer model under which it formerly operated.

"The big change was to become technology partners, and we laid that out pretty early with AT&T Business once we did away with all the vendors," Evans said. "We succeed side by side or we fail side by side. That way we have a much better collaboration going forward and we understand each other a lot better. It's a subtle mindset change, but it really changed how we operate."

AT&T Business demonstrated the benefits of its (SD-WAN) combined with AT&T Dedicated Internet services. "We could have continued on our current path by upgrading the routers but that really wouldn't have given us quite what we were looking for," he said. Evans wanted to consolidate all the network equipment at each site. "We wanted to simplify that as much as we can, and SD-WAN was the best way of doing that."

Enhanced visibility, control, and responsiveness

Deploying SD-WAN at 45 locations enabled NZTE to eliminate its firewalls, routers, and switches. "It's always

pleasing when you can replace three devices with one small one,” he said. “It lowers costs and complexity and gives us a single view of the network.”

Network management is greatly simplified. Everything is done automatically using VMware. Evans explained the intelligence of the network: “If I have two or three internet links, the solution will pick and choose the quickest path each way. That was one of the key points for us.”

The agency also uses a cloud security solution from AT&T Business. “It keeps the organization really safe and increases reliability,” Evans said. “This gear stays up. The performance is solid, and we have great visibility. I’ve been in the back of a cab when an issue has occurred, and with a couple of clicks on my mobile phone I was able to jump into the VMware portal and see what’s going on.”

The increased visibility has enhanced the IT staff effectiveness. “The biggest benefit for our end user is that we’re resolving things,” Evans noted. “They feel like we’re in control and we know what we’re doing because we can see and react very quickly.”

Satisfied, engaged customers

Introducing new technology was initially frustrating for staff. “When you put in a lot of things very quickly, it’s disruptive for the business,” he said. “We were changing emails, upgrading internet circuits, and giving them new laptops with new operating systems. We were putting in cloud security and SD-WAN, so we had to ride all that through.”

As staff adapted to the changes, their opinion of the IT department improved significantly. “When the CEO addressed the whole company, he actually had the IT team stand up to receive a round of applause, which never happens,” he said. “Customer satisfaction is very good. Staff

have gone from throwing rocks and burning effigies of us to being really engaged.”

As nice as it is to be recognized, Evans said, the IT team doesn’t take it for granted. “It’s something that we continue to work hard at.”



Technology to benefit the end user

Evans believes that NZTE’s venture with AT&T Business has succeeded because both parties were willing to think differently. “All the people that came before us in the network and security space kept doing more of the same, which is almost the very definition of insanity,” he said. “They just threw more money at the problem, trying the same things that weren’t working—only with new and better pieces of gear.”

The emergence of the cloud and related technologies provided opportunities to make effective changes. However, because NZTE is a government agency, it was initially barred from moving to the cloud. “We were told that everything had to remain on premises,” Evans said. Eventually, he convinced officials that with the help of vendors like AT&T Business, the agency could safely take advantage of cloud-based innovations.



The agency's data and applications now reside in the cloud with a high level of security, enabling staff to connect quickly and with high reliability from virtually any location. "Security is a big deal," he said. "We didn't have a lot before this. We had firewalls, but that's old-school thinking, where you've just protected the perimeter. That doesn't do it these days."

AT&T Business provided solutions that increased protection and offered better visibility and control. But Evans stressed that NZTE doesn't introduce technology without thinking about how the change will affect staff. "If something is a benefit to the end user or if it's going to make the boat go faster, we'll use it," Evans said. "If it's not, we won't do it."

A winning combination

Streamlining its vendor strategy enabled NZTE to develop what Evans calls "a winning alliance" with AT&T Business. "Once we split away all the noise, we had a deliberate strategy that's built on very strong relationships, so we pick our vendors and really go deep," he said. "This has allowed us to roll fast with SD-WAN, which has had a huge

benefit to NZTE, and implement a cloud security solution to help keep us safe."

"Understanding each other and becoming technology collaborators rather than a customer-provider paradigm has really changed the shape of how NZTE operates," he said.

"The very foundations that our industry run on—the internet, the VMware, cloud security—are all provided by AT&T Business," he added. "I'm not going to say we wouldn't be in business without AT&T, but it would be tricky. AT&T Business provides that glue that hangs it all together, and that's a really important foundation for NZTE."

The agency has been approached by other government organizations hoping to learn the secret of its IT success. "We're always happy to provide all the information," he said. Evans starts by recommending SD-WAN. "I tell them to use that technology and some more modern networking techniques because it will really improve the businesses that they're working in." He also touts customer care from AT&T Business. "We feel well looked after."

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