

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL SAVES MONEY THROUGH SUCCESSFUL BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE STRATEGY WITH JUNIPER NETWORKS

Summary

Company: Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Industry: Government

Challenges:

- Implement an effective telecommuting strategy to reduce office space by providing a remote service that is identical to a desktop experience in the office
- Find a network partner who can provide security, Windows and OSX roadmap compatibility, and full integration to existing services
- Support a multitude of devices, including tablet PCs

Selection Criteria: Tasked with finding the right technology to take the council to the next level of flexible working and BYOD, Solihull selected Juniper Networks as the ideal partner.

Network Solution:

- Juniper Networks SA4500 SSL VPN Appliance
- Juniper Networks Junos Pulse
- Juniper Networks SRX240 Services Gateway
- Juniper Networks SRX100 and SRX110 Services Gateway

Results:

- Introduced a secure and future-proof remote working and BYOD solution, ready to exploit the latest technologies
- Empowered a flexible and highly motivated workforce
- Realized cost savings and efficiency benefits with quicker decision making
- Enabled more staff working from home without spending on more equipment to create a more responsive and efficient organization

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council—a regional government district in the midlands of the U.K. with over 200,000 citizens—realized that in today’s fast-paced world, the most efficient and effective way to work isn’t necessarily at a fixed time and place in the office. As with many local governments, office space was at a premium, and Solihull MBC had received a remit to reduce occupancy to ten people for every seven desks.

It already had a telecommuting policy supported by a secure VPN solution in place, but when this required an upgrade, it was decided to step up the service so that more people could securely work from home.

Challenges

Solihull MBC didn’t just encourage a more flexible way of working, it was totally serious about the long-term benefits this approach could bring. Therefore, “new ways of working” became one of its top five priorities, and targets were put in place to meet those goals. The council has committed to reduce its total office space, costs, and carbon usage by 30 percent by 2016 as compared to August 2011 levels. As part of this effort, it has introduced the Green Travel Plan to identify what proportion of the council’s workforce can work from home and the contribution this could make, in terms of both office space and its carbon footprint.

Steve Halliday, the council’s head of IT, comments on the challenges this new way of working can bring: “As a council, we tend to deal with many more applications than a traditional business. Aside from the normal finance/HR/e-mail applications, our staff also works with hundreds of applications including social care, school management, street maintenance, and tax systems, many containing highly sensitive data, and often concerning vulnerable citizens. Security is of paramount importance to us, as the consequences of a data leak could be disastrous.”

Selection Criteria

Hilary Staton, technical operations manager, was tasked with finding the right technology partner to take the council to the next level of flexible working, including a comprehensive Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategy. She explains her decision to work with Juniper’s solutions: “With a much more agile workforce, we were looking at ways to maximize our assets, including hardware. Although we’ve had a BYOD strategy implemented for a while, it was important that a new network partner could take this to the next level with us, in line with our objectives for 2016. We needed a highly secure solution, capable of integrating with all of our services and, crucially, compatible with our diverse technical environment. Juniper was clearly able to meet our requirements, and we’ve implemented several Juniper Networks® SA4500 SSL VPN Appliances which are used for remote access by our staff.”

Solution

Staff can now use their own devices to access Solihull MBC’s network, applications, and other online resources from home (at their manager’s discretion, of course), and already 12-15 percent of the 2,500-strong workforce has chosen this route. The experience delivered to them via a Web browser log-on, using a one-off Java or ActiveX plug-in, is identical to the one they would have on a desktop in the office. Staff members who work with Apple MacOS or tablet devices use Juniper Networks Junos® Pulse to connect to

the network, and find this a really easy way to connect directly yet securely to their workspace. Junos Pulse is a browser-based endpoint software platform that enables dynamic SSL VPN connectivity, unified access control (UAC), and mobile security through a simple user interface. It checks the security status of each device and connection, and can even drop a connection midway if something changes which could pose a threat to security. Pulse also removes the complexity from network connectivity and access control collaboration. As no data is actually stored on the personal device, it is a very secure way of working remotely. Should the device be lost or stolen, there is no possibility of sensitive data ending up in the wrong hands.

“It was important that a new network partner could take this to the next level with us. We needed a totally secure solution, capable of integrating with all of our services and, crucially, compatible with Windows versions and giving a full desktop user experience. Juniper Networks ticked all the boxes for us, and we’ve implemented several SA4500 SSL VPN Appliances which are used for remote access by our staff.”

- Hilary Staton, Technical Operations Manager,
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

In addition to the VPN solution, Juniper Networks also plays a key role in the council's data center. The Juniper Networks SRX240 Services Gateway is used to provide site-to-site IP security and resilience, and SRX100 and SRX110 Services Gateway devices are used at the edge of the network to provide services to smaller sites, which has proved to be a more cost-effective solution than installing dedicated private circuits for these sites. These devices help to protect the network and data flowing across it within the local area network (LAN) environment.

Results

Staff working remotely report being much more productive and responsive, since updates to both the policy and network infrastructure were completed. They cut out the travel time required to get into an office, and find that they tend to log on earlier than before and stay on a little longer than they would in an office. The flexibility to plan their own time makes them feel motivated and trusted. With the inclement weather sometimes experienced in the U.K., the option to work from home is very welcome and means that business can continue much as normal, rather than having to deal with unexpected disruption when circumstances prevent an employee from reaching the office.

Department managers also see efficiency benefits from the new policy because decisions are reached without delay, processes tend to run more smoothly, and overall less time is wasted. Halliday is most focused on the bottom line benefits and says: “Real cost savings have been achieved as well. BYOD workers have been returning their council-owned laptops, BlackBerries, and other devices, generating ongoing savings. Even greater savings come from the efficiencies of staff being able to securely access our systems and do their jobs from wherever they are. Many staff have corporate devices in the office and corporate devices at home, so they can securely access systems in the event of an out of hours emergency. They did not want to carry a laptop with them every day for the few occasions a year when this is necessary. Juniper allows them to access systems from their own device at home, taking out this requirement. We call this Your Own Device at Home (YODAH), and it is affordable for many more staff. It not only reduces costs but improves the efficiency and responsiveness of the organization.”

For More Information

To find out more about Juniper Networks products and solutions, please visit www.juniper.net.

About Juniper Networks

Juniper Networks is in the business of network innovation. From devices to data centers, from consumers to cloud providers, Juniper Networks delivers the software, silicon and systems that transform the experience and economics of networking. The company serves customers and partners worldwide. Additional information can be found at www.juniper.net.

Corporate and Sales Headquarters

Juniper Networks, Inc.
1194 North Mathilda Avenue
Sunnyvale, CA 94089 USA
Phone: 888.JUNIPER (888.586.4737)
or 408.745.2000
Fax: 408.745.2100
www.juniper.net

APAC and EMEA Headquarters

Juniper Networks International B.V.
Boeing Avenue 240
1119 PZ Schiphol-Rijk
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: 31.0.207.125.700
Fax: 31.0.207.125.701

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