

CASE STUDY: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

COUNTERPATH STREAMLINES NETWORK PERFORMANCE TO SUPPORT FUTURE DATA GROWTH

"Primus provided us with a fast connection on a very tight schedule, and they helped us future proof to support new applications."

- Nadim Slim, IT administrator, CounterPath



SUMMARY

Region:
Ottawa, ON

Industry:
Telecommunications

Locations:

- Head office in Vancouver
- Offices in Victoria, Ottawa, Boston, Chicago

Employees:
120 permanent – up to 180 with contract workers

Business Challenges:
Looking for advanced network performance to support growth in data from new applications

Solution:

- 100 Megabytes/second
- LAN extension
- Unmetered service

Key Results:

- Reliable connectivity & reduced IT maintenance
- Symmetrical upload and download speeds
- Advanced network performance
- Future proofing to support new applications

BACKGROUND

CounterPath Corporation is a provider of desktop and mobile VoIP communications software to enterprises, service providers, and original equipment manufacturers. Headquartered in Vancouver, BC, CounterPath has developed multiple OEM and channel partnerships with many of the leading telcos and the company employs 120 workers in six locations across Canada and the US.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The move of CounterPath's Ottawa office to a new location provided the organization with an opportunity to re-evaluate its connectivity options. The company had run voice and data over a copper service from one of Canada's large, incumbent providers, but was looking to ensure advanced network performance via a fibre solution to support growth in data traffic that was expected with the introduction of new applications. With the move, CounterPath called for bids from several of the major telcos.

As CounterPath's IT administrator Nadim Slim explained, the team was working "on a really tight deadline" with the Ottawa move and needed to deploy its networking infrastructure in December – a time of year when many of the other telecommunications firms were unable to commit to a delivery date for the new installation. In his view, Primus "won on two counts: they were the only ones that were willing to commit, and they came in with the better proposal."

SOLUTION

Nadim attributed rapid progress on its fibre deployment to Primus' simplified process for management of the client relationship. Nadim worked with a Primus sales representative, who helped manage CounterPath's onboard to the service, and a network technician who managed technical matters. In his view, having two key points of contact at Primus – as opposed to many with

discrete and limited responsibilities (as he's experienced in other organizations) – was critical to advancement of the project.

CounterPath's fibre optic connection now serves as the foundation for all voice and data communications for the 30 person Ottawa office. All company locations are connected through a VPN, which runs on the fibre in Ottawa's case; employee computers connect to the Internet over fibre and voice communications are delivered through an IP-based PBX and company softphones. Reliable communications are critical to CounterPath's business: the VPN, for example, serves as a secure means for transferring code for software collaboration between development teams that are dispersed throughout the various locations, and the VPN acts as a shared network that offers visibility into operational systems across offices, allowing the company to function as one. But this functionality is more effective with fast fibre connectivity which acts as a solid foundation for internal VPN collaboration and external telecommunications in Ottawa.

KEY RESULT

Symmetrical Upload and Download Speeds and Built-in Redundancy

According to Nadim, the problem with DSL and cable connections is that they have good download speeds, but poor upload speeds. Since CounterPath continuously transfers information back and forth between office locations and five data centres (in house facilities in Vancouver, Chicago, and Ottawa as well as two colocation sites in Vancouver and Boston), the company needed a service that was symmetrical or at least had adequate upload speeds: "because we have the VPN," Nadim explained, "we needed to go to fibre. It's superfast both ways." As compared to copper, which can experience interference or degrade, fibre is also more reliable, he added.

Typically two backup lines are installed to provide automatic failover, delivering the redundancy that is critical to communications continuity and fibre is not affected by the elements: Nadim noted, "once it's running, it runs forever. Service level agreements are pretty standard across the industry, but what really counts is reliability."

Less Maintenance Administration for IT = More Productivity

For CounterPath, the switch to fibre has produced reliable connectivity and a VPN network with superfast speed. This improved user experience has translated into additional benefit for the company's IT department. While the shift to fibre was "transparent" to users, there have been no service drop offs and no complaints with the new service: as Nadim observed, "when people are not calling [IT with service requests], that's a good thing." Better service performance has had an impact on productivity for both IT which has received fewer maintenance calls and for company employees – "every hour that calls cannot come in or go out means that employees are not doing their job," Nadim explained.

Future Proofing to Support New Applications

Additionally, the fibre service future proofs CounterPath against additional time and cost investment when needs change. While it would be necessary to add another connection with copper to gain additional speed or capacity, with fibre, it will be possible to upgrade to gigabit speed to support advanced applications using the same cable, with a simple equipment update that is managed by Primus. The company is considering fibre deployment to support new applications, such as a backup system for each location to provide business continuity in case of natural or other disaster. Plans are also underway to centralize and move CounterPath's PBX into the data centre, a move that is dependent on the company having fast, reliable connectivity in place.

Lessons learned

In this type of deployment, Nadim recommends looking for a supplier that will act as a true partner who understands your business issue. "I would recommend Primus to anyone looking for a reliable provider that will go above and beyond what is normally delivered. If I have to do another job, I know that they will pull through for me. Without Primus, the Ottawa office move would not have been possible."

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