

Zen Internet Case Study

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Wynsors World of Shoes streamline IT systems through ZenPartner, NCS Support Services

The Challenge

Wynsors World of Shoes needed to streamline their IT systems across the head office and 45 national retail outlets. The IT manager for the company previously used a system connecting directly to the company stores via a 56K modem, collecting data by dialing each store once overnight, but this only allowed the transfer of small amounts of data. IT support for the stores was carried out over the same connection, using remote management software which manually dialled the connection. This remote support had to be manually initiated at the remote end to establish a connection, so each attempt involved a couple of phone calls to the stores in order to arrange this.

Problems also occurred with the accidental interruption of data connections with voice and vice versa which was extremely frustrating when trying to support the remote sites. The 56k connections were sometimes unreliable, requiring a site visit to fix problems.

They turned to long established ZenPartner, NCS Support Services, for assistance in streamlining this IT system so that communication and support levels could be improved. A major problem with the system was the time and money being wasted travelling between the store sites to resolve IT based problems.

The Solution

NCS were able to offer a complete solution, supplying ZenADSL broadband across all the sites and head office. They were able to link the stores together through VPN (Virtual Private Network) connections using the ZenADSL, and supplied firewalls and HP file servers to the sites to ensure security and improved data systems. NCS also provided essential ongoing support through a combination of phone calls, remote dial-in and regular visits.

The Benefits

The introduction of the ADSL connections was a leap forward for Wynsors World of Shoes. NCS supplied a full wide area network solution, with an always-on connection to each store. The improved connection speeds also allows the transfer of large amounts of data with ease. For example software updates - something that would have taken several days to co-ordinate over 56k connections. Wynsors World of Shoes now have the ability to monitor the remote equipment, in real time, to the point where they can be aware of a hardware failure even before the branch call to report it. They now use the ADSL for a live audio stream to each store for the in-store radio station, Wynsors FM, which plays over the PA systems and contains marketing information for customers.

The free static IP addresses supplied by Zen with the ADSL accounts added to the stability and reliability of this radio streaming and means that logging on from a remote location using a VPN is easier as it can always be found through a secure route. They also started running CCTV and footfall measuring solutions in some branches, again all monitored and administered centrally over Zen connections.

The excellent uncontended Zen network is a key factor as the connections have consistent speed levels at all times, providing an efficient link for the CCTV images and the remote access. The VPN system provided by NCS also enabled the company to set-up a direct line to the bank, for secure authorisation of credit card sales, allowing much quicker transaction times. They were also able to reduce bank charges by introducing a secure system for authorising Chip & Pin transactions directly with the bank.

Michael Lomas, IT Manager Wynsors World of Shoes, commented:

“The solution provided by NCS and Zen proved to be so reliable that a similar solution for remote networking within the footwear group of the company has been introduced. The reaction time for dealing with and solving IT problems at store level has increased significantly therefore cutting down on site visits, traveling times and costs. The ongoing support from NCS is an excellent asset to this solution.”