

# SSP: Food giant with an appetite to modernise

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Case Study





Having existed in various forms for more than 70 years, SSP is a ubiquitous presence within motorway services, railway stations and airports throughout the UK.

Operating in 35 countries worldwide, and with 600 UK units alone, this London Stock Exchange listed business is perhaps better known for the franchises it operates (such as Burger King and Starbucks) as well as its own brands which include popular favourites Upper Crust and Millie's Cookies.



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# ② The challenge

**For a large and geographically diverse business, ageing connectivity was a major obstacle to continued success and expansion.**

With all connectivity flowing back into SSP's data centres, those application requirements were constrained by a traditional networking model.

Identifying SD-WAN as a catch-all solution for their varied needs, SSP turned to existing partner Zen to build the required service.

**In order to modernise, SSP's requirements were threefold:**

- 1 A requirement for applications to be able to breakout to the internet from individual unit locations
- 2 A need for certain applications to continue to be routed through the data centre
- 3 A general requirement for greater application security

“We used to have a pretty classic ADSL connectivity across our 600 plus units in the UK. But over the last 18 months, we've kicked off a network expansion programme, driven by a need to sunset our old copper technology and also by more bandwidth hungry applications.”

**SSP**

# ✔ The solution

**“We were looking for a product that was more suitable for those types of application requirements, hence SD-WAN”.**

And having identified SD-WAN as the solution, SSP were then in the rather unique position of helping to build out Zen’s SD-WAN proposition.

“Although SD-WAN has existed as a concept for a number of years. It is still a relatively new product, which meant that SSP and Zen had to work together. There was no reference book where we could look and say, ‘this is how it’s done’. As an early customer, we were really writing the script together as we went along.”

And that script consisted of an initial SD-WAN rollout to ten SSP sites, increasing to 100, 300 and finally the majority of SSP’s UK locations over three phases.

Prior to SD-WAN implementation, all of SSP’s internet traffic in the UK was backhauled through its data centre, an extremely bandwidth-hungry process which also had an adverse impact on performance. But with the new SD-WAN setup, SSP’s application requirements have been met.



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# ☆ The benefits

**An immediately apparent benefit for SSP is the greater ease and simplicity with which network changes can be made.**

“SD-WAN gives you the capability to make the decision at the end point. And it **keeps things simple**. It’s not like a classic firewall, for example, where you need an expert with a CCIE to make any changes. It’s a portal-driven system where you can make changes more easily... Going forward, we will have breakouts, and each application can be treated based on its own merits. If an application needs to talk to an external source – such as in Office 365 – it doesn’t need to come back to our data centre. That traffic will be able to breakout right from our units into the internet directly, which saves a lot of bandwidth and cost on the backhaul, while having an impact on performance as well.

**“Other traffic, meanwhile, can still be routed through our secure data centre,** and this setup will also allow us to deploy a lot of SaaS solutions in the future.”

SSP’s new SD-WAN solution will facilitate the network modernisation that the business required. It will allow the segregation of traffic, application prioritisation and additional security necessary in a modern, geographically diverse business. And, as SSP adds, “Disaster Recovery is enabled with the ability to switch traffic from one type to another, for example broadband to mobile 5G.”

With the **ability to make changes on the fly**, SSP are excited by the prospect of better, more intelligent bandwidth allocation. “We can simply switch bandwidth based on requirements”, they say.

And what about working with Zen? The relationship has proven to be extremely fruitful and productive.

**“The people at Zen have been absolutely brilliant. In terms of relationship management, Zen is a great business to talk to.**

One of the reasons for that is the many people at Zen who have been there for many years, which really

speaks volumes. We’ve been operating with Zen as a partner for nearly 15 years and throughout the pandemic we received absolutely brilliant support from them, which really cemented our relationship. We knew we could trust Zen and their networking pedigree.”

# Smart Networking for Smart Business

Get in touch today to find out more  
and start your journey with Zen

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