



Canopus Case Study:

Voice communication: raising the standard,
lowering the cost

3 site network and SIP Trunking brought to life by
Virtual Private LAN Service (VPLS)

Assured Convergence is a collaboration
between Unified Comms provider Reeves Lund,
and Ethernet Carrier, Exponential-e Ltd.

Introduction

Successfully deploying fit-for-purpose business communications for any organisation requires specialist skills. Add into that a need to accommodate the client's significant organic growth as well as their various company acquisitions and the task becomes even more of a challenge. This is why Canopius has retained Reeves Lund as its ICT consultant of choice for well over a decade is remarkable and a reflection on Reeves Lund's ability to meet their client's needs.

Background

Canopius is one of the largest privately-owned Lloyd's insurance underwriting businesses with financial resources in excess of £300 million. With offices in London, Bermuda, Singapore, Dublin and Australia, Canopius Group underwrite a diversified book of specialist business worldwide. During the last 10 years the insurance group has gone through a management buy-out, acquired other companies, relocated offices and opened up international operations in a number of different countries.

The acquisition of Creechurch back in 2007 is a good example of how Reeves Lund and Canopius have worked together. Reeves Lund relocated Creechurch's voice infrastructure and that of Canopius into the Lloyds building and consolidated the two networks into one resilient platform.

Reeves Lund project managed the entire move of over 300 staff and delivered feature-rich, easy-to-use business communications cost-effectively at the new site.



Reeves Lund understands our business and the wider insurance market. We've worked with Reeves Lund for over 16 years. It is adept at assessing our immediate needs as well as how our voice and data requirements will evolve. Its consultative advice, project management and ability to make complex solutions simple means it has been instrumental to our business.



Brent Gebbie, Support and Infrastructure Manager at Canopius.



Canopius received a high-quality, high-performance voice solution with sophisticated processing capabilities & support for mobility.

The solution has enabled the Lloyds insurance syndicate to cost-effectively connect into the Lloyds building telephony system but without the need to rent Lloyds handsets and other hardware. This kept costs down considerably. The resulting system, based on state-of-the-art Avaya communication manager software provides a series of easy-to-use advanced capabilities including voicemail, auto-attendant, conferencing and one-number mobility.

Peter Harper Hill (Director) from Reeves Lund explains “Canopius provides first-class service to its clients and brokers. It is dedicated to efficiently handling its clients insurance and reinsurance needs. The new voice solution makes it easier to communicate and has yielded higher levels of collaboration and responsiveness”.

Canopius can migrate to full IP telephony at any time because the 500 licences provided are capable of supporting digital, analogue and IP extensions. Connectivity is provided to the PSTN via 120 ISDN lines which are backed up for resiliency. Throughout the project and whenever possible existing hardware was reused contributing further to the phenomenal return on investment the deployment provided.

Pre-existing DDI ranges from the previous offices were rerouted to the new DDI range in Lloyds guaranteeing that all numbers were supported. Internal calls are supported on a private network so Canopius benefits from free calls within the Lloyds building.



At the time we needed to leverage the investment we had made at the existing sites. We also needed a solution to cover three floors of the Lloyds building and capable of meeting all our business needs. Reeves Lund plans projects meticulously and their holistic approach at realistic prices gives us peace of mind. ”

Brent Gebbie, Support and Infrastructure Manager at Canopius.

Reeves Lund recognised the importance of real-time communication between managing agents and their brokers.

So the system's conferencing facility provides Canopus with its own private, secure conference bridge and reduces the need for expensive third party conference providers. A "follow me" function allows all calls to reach the intended recipient wherever they are and allows calls to be easily diverted to mobile. "One number" reachability keeps everyone in touch and important calls always get through.

Canopus is fully supported with proactive monitoring and maintenance. Remote staff are warned of any problems automatically via an intelligent alarm system and in the vast majority of cases this is sufficient for the problem to be corrected remotely before the user is even aware. Should a field engineer be required, they come armed with remote monitoring data needed to correct the problem fast. Self-diagnostics and self-healing capabilities provide the highest levels of business continuity.

Key to the success of this project however was the need for strong project management. Patrick Lund from Reeves Lund expands "We planned the move and the upgrade carefully so that there would be no loss of service. Different controlled phases were mapped out over five weekends with a single point of contact assigned for all the sites involved throughout the migration. Our goal, which we achieved, was to have no downtime whatsoever and for staff leaving the previous premises on the Friday to be up and running quickly and easily on their arrival at Lloyds on the Monday morning.

The servers and gateways were installed first along with the cabling infrastructure, followed by the phased migration of staff and then decommissioning of the vacated buildings. Digital cards made available by the first phase of staff moving to the new site were then moved to the new site in readiness for the next phase."

A distributed architecture gave further support for business continuity by effectively preventing any part of the solution becoming a single point of failure.

Canopus today

Canopus is now preparing for the significant changes taking place in the insurance and reinsurance market. Its 10Mbps connectivity is already severely under pressure. With the insurance industry's migration to electronic placing of risk, claims handling and settlement this pressure is set to increase. Other initiatives like the Lloyds exchange messaging hub, RI3K and Acord standards work all have ramifications.

To help identify the issues Reeves Lund was on hand again. It introduced Canopus to its preferred next-generation network provider Exponential-e that specialises in deploying robust, high-speed corporate WANs and managed services for businesses.

The three companies explored opportunities for significantly and cost-effectively increasing the bandwidth available to Canopus. Canopus now has a Gigabit fibre-optic connection on which it is supporting 100Mbps of non contended and symmetrical business Internet. Exponential-e's use of a proprietary routing algorithm makes this Internet service the fastest available in the UK. Canopus receives the service as a simple-to-use Ethernet interface capable of being plugged straight into its LAN.

Commenting on the new capability, Dave Joplin, Exponential-e's business development manager said "Canopius can use its next generation network to support converged services which could include not only traditional services but also those unique to the Lloyds market".

Canopius now has the opportunity to take things a step further by moving to VPLS. Virtual Private LAN Services effectively combine different sites or parts of the business into one extended LAN even if that LAN is across different geographic areas.

Dave expands "VPLS is able to hide all the complexity created when different technologies and protocols are deployed across a multi-site organisation. VPLS conceals all of that behind one service-supporting Ethernet layer spread across all sites – just like a very big LAN".

All servers, datacentres, services and applications sitting anywhere on that wide area network believe, when supported by VPLS, that they are on the same LAN or logical subnet. Servers and datacentres need never be a single point of failure and virtualised resources can be distributed remotely to any part of the WAN.

No complex router configuration or specialist engineers are required because it all takes place at layer 2 with familiar and easy to use Ethernet as the service layer.

Most importantly the new underlying Gigabit infrastructure is essentially a single converged platform from which a range of services can be supported. So Canopius can choose to ring-fence the bandwidth dedicated to the Internet service and allocate free bandwidth to other services such as SIP trunking, IP telephony and other WAN services. Service levels and quality guarantees can be then applied to each of the services individually with each service securely insulated.



"Canopius' position as a leading player in the insurance underwriting market means it will continue to evolve and meet a raft of new challenges head on. We are confident that we have, in Reeves Lund, the ideal partner capable of meeting our needs for powerful and cost-effective communications in the years to come".

Brent Gebbie, Support and Infrastructure Manager at Canopius.

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