



power to you



Established in 1870, the Cheshire was one of the first Permanent Societies, starting a revolution in personal finance.

In 2008, it merged with Nationwide, the world's largest building society, allowing the Cheshire to increase the financial security of its customers and their investments.

The Cheshire says that customers now get the best of both worlds - a friendly, local service with the added peace of mind that over 15 million people already trust Nationwide with their money. With 42 branches throughout the North West of England and 13 estate agencies, the Cheshire is a popular, successful, regionally-based society serving over 450,000 members.

To meet its business objectives the Cheshire decided that it needed a suite of managed services for the whole of its voice and data communications estate. In addition to its main customer contact centre, the Society had numerous other departments which also take or make calls to internal and external customers such as the IT service desk and mortgage processing.

The Society wanted to consider integrating these functions within an overall solution. Cost savings were expected and it was felt that calls could be routed more effectively around the business with a single network based on IP. It was hoped that implementing a single voice and data Wide Area Network (WAN) would improve the performance of key business applications, particularly across its branches.

Lost calls

The existing Avaya switch, supporting the contact centre, had reached the end of its life. Due to fluctuations in marketing activities and the limited size of the contact centre, the Cheshire was unable to manage the peaks and troughs in calls, meaning a substantial number of customer calls could be lost.

The Society's new business plan called for improved customer service by offering integrated sales channels, flexibility and lower costs. The contact centre also needed to grow in line with its future strategy, although it was clear that the limitations of the building presented a major obstacle.

Vodafone took time to understand the Society's technical requirements and business plan and developed a fully converged solution.

It became apparent that to deliver these and other requirements, Vodafone needed to design a very sophisticated WAN. Drawing on the Vodafone team's huge base of experience in deploying Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) networks, the next generation WAN design was born.

Virtual contact centre saves an immediate £100,000

Vodafone proposed a virtual contact centre where agents could be located at remote branches linked by an MPLS network. This would allow for centralised services, located at the head office in Macclesfield, to be distributed to the branches.

The Cheshire also wanted to manage all calls into the branches at a central location but retain the local numbers. Vodafone recommended an upgraded Nortel Meridian IPT solution, replacing the existing Avaya INDeX switch.

The new network was set up to handle voice and data traffic allowing for consolidation across all sites. To successfully deliver voice and data across one network, Vodafone implemented a MPLS network. Different types of media required different bandwidths and the new network would enable prioritisation of media, for example voice ahead of data, to manage the traffic across the network.

The network solution comprises three components:

- BT IP Clear MPLS Network (Wires Only)
- Cisco Voice and Data Routers on each site to manage the network
- Packeteer WAN and application optimiser

Vodafone fully understood the critical importance of this project, from the detailed briefings received from the Cheshire, as well as from discussions held at meetings over a 12 month period. Vodafone leveraged as much as possible of the investment that the Cheshire Building Society had made in their existing Nortel telephony infrastructure to reduce implementation costs.

The creation of Cheshire Building Society's new virtual contact centre led to an immediate saving of £100,000 per annum and the Society is in a strong position to leverage future gains and cost reductions. The voice and converged networks are moving the business forward, with strong payback.

The flexibility of the MPLS network is perhaps the most crucial business benefit, as this ensures business continuity and enables the Society to easily redirect lines to the continuity site. Due to the dynamic and flexible nature of the new infrastructure, the Society has been able to revolutionise its estate agency business.

It has created an offering which provides a virtualised solution across all branch locations with centralised call teams based in Macclesfield and nearby Romiley for support.

This enhances the service provided to members and creates a more efficient and significantly lower cost business.

Consolidation to one supplier and one support package avoided costly and time consuming multiple bills, contacts points and problem resolution processes.

By working with one supplier, the Society was able to look at costs as part of the overall project and by simply changing the inbound call services it saved an immediate £100,000 per annum.

The Management Information System (MIS) has provided exactly what the Society wanted and Service Desk Managers are more than happy with their call and service statistics. The solution has also helped to improve sales performance through the branch network, providing additional sales opportunities and this increased business will help pay for the switch in the long term.



Significant benefits

- The creation of Cheshire Building Society's virtual contact centre led to an immediate saving of £100,000 per annum
- The solution provides the platform for the Cheshire's future expansion and business development plans
- Customer service has been enhanced through much improved call management, while retaining local contact numbers
- Business continuity is now more certain with a system that enables the Society to easily redirect lines to the continuity site
- Due to the dynamic and flexible nature of the new infrastructure, its estate agency business has been revolutionised with a virtualised solution across all branch locations significantly lowering costs
- Consolidation to one supplier and one support package provides a streamlined system, which is easy to operate and manage
- The solution has also helped to improve sales performance through the branch network, providing additional sales opportunities that will help pay for the investment in the long term

