



“With Vodafone Secure Remote Access we expanded the Gold Bar model rapidly, publishing a five-fold profit increase from mobile gold buying.”

Andrew Lawrence, IT Manager, Harvey & Thompson

power to you



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**Dave Parry, Head of Operations,
Harvey & Thompson Gold Bar**

After opening its first shop in London in 1897, Harvey & Thompson is now the UK’s largest pawnbroker.

Following dramatic growth in recent years, the company now operates 130 stores with more than 800 staff. Its core business is second-hand jewellery sales, cheque cashing and payday advances and it was the first national company to offer a prepaid MasterCard.

To be successful Harvey & Thompson has to keep a close eye on fluctuating gold prices and then respond rapidly to market opportunities. When the price of gold rose sharply, the firm launched an innovative ‘Gold Bar’ service in shopping centres, giving customers the opportunity to exchange gold jewellery for cash at a small mobile retail unit.

The concept was an outstanding success – within five months of initial trials Harvey & Thompson was operating 65 mobile outlets. But this rapid expansion brought a new challenge, with traditional paper-based customer transaction processes no longer viable.

Ambitious roll-out

Andrew Lawrence, IT Manager, Harvey & Thompson, says: “When we saw how popular the Gold Bars were, we responded with an ambitious rollout. As set-up was so fast, we started out with paper returns that sales staff sent to the office for the accounts team to process.

“That worked for two Gold Bars, but not for 65. We needed an efficient, automated system – both to avoid recruiting extra accounts staff, and to enable regular reporting by bringing the Gold Bars onto the Point of Sale (POS) platform used by the rest of the business.”

The mobile units didn’t have fixed-line technology, but they did have access to power sockets that could be used for laptops. Lawrence and his colleagues had to find a cost-effective platform that would give staff a reliable mobile data connection – while also providing the security to ensure compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS).

“We reviewed the market and discovered that Vodafone Secure Remote Access (VSRA) could be used to roll out secure, mobile broadband connections from the Gold Bars, through our virtual private network client to our wide area network.

Fastest and best

“It soon became clear this was the fastest and best way to meet our requirements,” says Andrew.

Harvey & Thompson also liked the fact that VSRA features an intuitive user interface that makes it simple to establish remote connections. “We recruit staff based on their customer service skills, not their IT experience. We wanted a service that anyone could master quickly and operate with minimum fuss,” he says. “VSRA met that need, and was the only solution to offer mobile connectivity with always-on security.”

Andrew and his colleagues were supported by a Vodafone Project Manager, who co-ordinated the installation of VSRA on Lenovo SL500 laptops. Harvey & Thompson also opted for Full Disk Encryption and Media Encryption from Vodafone’s security portfolio – helping to protect the company’s laptops and data in case of loss or theft.

“Our Vodafone Project Manager was our single point of contact throughout the process. Rapid deployment was important to us and she helped us complete the project within the timelines we’d set,” says Andrew.

“The last thing we wanted was to distract staff from customers by burdening them with complex technology. Vodafone Secure Remote Access is straightforward – they were up and running immediately, without any training.”

Andrew Lawrence, IT Manager, Harvey & Thompson

Staff now use VSRA on their laptops to connect securely with their email accounts, the internet and the Harvey & Thompson POS system.

Rather than spending time writing paper receipts and sending them to the office, they are entered directly into the POS system, making them instantly available for processing and reporting by accounting staff.

Five-fold profit increase

By cutting out time-consuming paper-based processes, the firm has enabled the accounts team to process orders faster. Now they can meet the increasing demand created by the success of the Gold Bars – and the company no longer needs to find extra budget for the recruitment and ongoing support of new staff.

Dave Parry, Head of Operations at Harvey & Thompson Gold Bar, says: “The paper-based system was creating around 80 extra hours of work a week, so we were looking at taking on more accountants to handle Gold Bar sales.

“By implementing VSRA, we’ve replaced manual data entry with swift, secure transfer of data from all 65 Gold Bars into the POS system. As a result, our accounts team is more productive and the speed at which we process information has significantly improved.”

Secure mobile working has given Harvey & Thompson the agility to pursue a lucrative revenue stream. “With the help of VSRA we expanded the Gold Bar model rapidly and took maximum advantage of its profitability,” says Lawrence. “In our annual report, we published a remarkable five-fold profit increase from mobile gold buying.”

Regulatory compliance

The solution also gives Andrew and his team the reassurance that company data is safe and operations are compliant with financial regulations. “VSRA continuously monitors our hardware and software inventory, connectivity options and security applications, and gives us simple, effective control over policies for end users,” Andrew explains. “We can also prove that our mobile data is encrypted, enabling us to demonstrate regulatory compliance.”

A simple system was crucial. With the Vodafone solution, even staff with limited IT experience are adapting quickly to the move away from paper-based processes and are becoming more productive as a result. As well as sending data directly into the POS system, they can use the internet to look up customer addresses on the spot, and contact colleagues via email.

Says Lawrence: “The last thing we wanted was to distract staff from customers by burdening them with complex technology. VSRA is straightforward – Vodafone was up and running immediately, without any training. If anything, it has enhanced customer service because they can complete transactions faster and offer an efficient, friendly service.”

The success of the project has prompted Harvey & Thompson to move its mobile contracts to Vodafone. It is also considering the migration of fixed lines so it can reap the savings and improved customer service benefits of working with Vodafone as its sole communications supplier.

Significant benefits

- Vodafone Secure Remote Access (VSRA) has enabled Harvey & Thompson to post a five-fold increase in the profitability of its Gold Bar mobile retail outlets
- VSRA provides a cost-effective reliable mobile data platform – while also meeting the stringent Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS)
- An intuitive user interface makes it simple to establish remote connections, enabling staff to use equipment immediately without specific IT capability or training
- Sales data is now entered directly into the POS system, making it instantly available for processing and analysing by accounting staff
- The solution means that the company no longer needs to find extra budget for the recruitment and ongoing support of new staff
- The accounts team is more productive and the speed at which information is processed has significantly improved, saving time and money
- Customer service is enhanced as staff can complete transactions faster and offer an efficient, friendly service

