

Reclaiming Resources



Gallagher Bassett

Gallagher Bassett is one of the largest claims and risk management companies in the UK, with 150 staff handling over 50,000 claims per annum. Since 1991, the company has successfully concluded over 250,000 liability claims on behalf of over 200 self-funded and insured clients. As well as a UK Head Office in London, Gallagher Bassett has offices in Leeds, Burton, Lichfield, Stirling and South Queensferry.

Gallagher Bassett International has a worldwide turnover of over 240 Million Euros..

The challenges

Gallagher Bassett operates from seven geographically diverse UK locations, running remote applications from the group's Chicago Head Office. The IT infrastructure had to provide fast, secure communications links between all the offices and several other UK locations. "When we first met with Gallagher Bassett, it was clear that the group were outgrowing their network," explains Pat McDonald, Enterprise Account Manager at Claranet.

"They were operating an IPSec network, which required a secure connection from each office to the next, with firewalls and routers at each separate location."

The network required secure IP tunnels between each office, placing restrictions on the available bandwidth between offices and to the London Head Office. Consequently, the traffic on Gallagher Bassett's network, particularly at peak times, was slowing down.

"Our network was struggling," said Michael Christensen, UK IT Manager of Gallagher Bassett. "We have over 150 staff often accessing the same application from Chicago. Even downloading emails or printing could be unbearably slow."

"We needed a fast, integrated network that would dramatically reduce the time and effort spent managing the infrastructure. Our technicians were constantly upgrading individual firewalls and routers and keeping records to ensure compliance with the Sarbanes-Oxley data retention requirements. The administration side was unsustainable."



The solution

Claranet implemented a nationwide managed Multi Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network to replace the existing point-to-point IPsec infrastructure. Work on the upgrade began in August 2006 and the entire system went live in March 2007.

Connection

The Gallagher Bassett network was connected to the Claranet backbone using MPLS Virtual Private Networking (VPN) technology, providing an ultra-fast, secure connection to other offices and the global Internet.

"The MPLS protocol creates a dedicated secure layer within a network that carries data for all users," explains Pat.

"It's easiest to think of MPLS as a "cloud" within which users are working in a totally secure environment. We installed firewalls, so that users can break out of the cloud and access the global Internet where necessary, but the MPLS infrastructure meant that offices and users could connect to each other far faster without passing through any number of firewalls en route."

The Gallagher Bassett MPLS solution was managed from Claranet's London Telecity II datacentre, which has a managed Network Operations Centre with staff available on-site 24/7. Two dedicated 2Mb leased lines connected Gallagher Bassett's London office to the datacentre, while other offices were connected through 2Mb ADSL connections. All offices were connected to the Gallagher Bassett US application server through a VPN link from the Claranet datacentre to Chicago.

Previously, Gallagher Bassett had over ten firewalls throughout the network, but Claranet deployed only two Netscreen 25 firewalls at the edge of the MPLS network to monitor traffic passing in and out. While most routers filter traffic using "going to/coming from" identification, the Netscreen firewalls use Stateful Inspection technology, which examines the context and purpose of individual data packets before granting access.

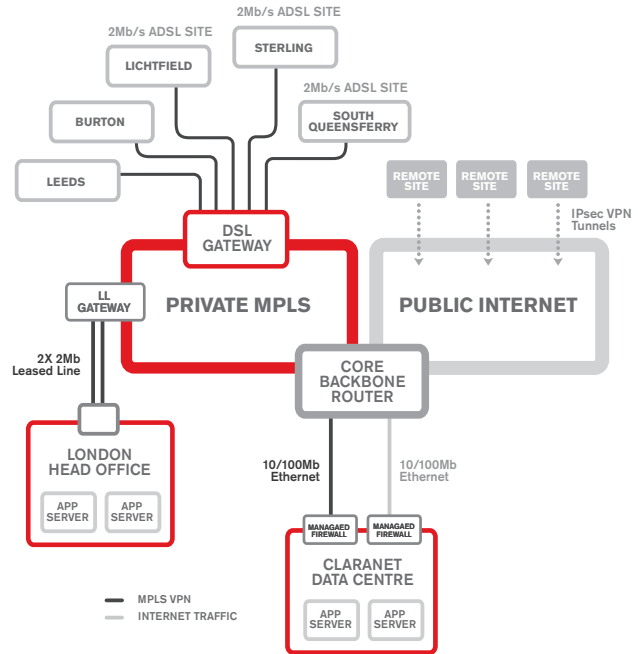
Scalability

"It's vital that some of our employees can access information quickly and securely at home," says Michael Christensen.

"Claranet implemented a secure system that allowed individual users to log in via the secure MPLS network. This allows us to add as many home users as we need, improving productivity."

Gallagher Bassett's expanding business meant that their system had to be able to cope with more offices, more users and more data.

"MPLS is unrivalled in its scalability," says Pat McDonald. "Because all users operate on an equal footing within the MPLS cloud, adding a new secure connection is much easier - mainly because there are no extra firewalls."



The result

"The new network was immediately effective in speeding up processes, according to employee feedback," says Michael Christensen.

"Accessing files, downloading emails, and connecting to services are all much faster with the new system."

Claranet's Pat McDonald is equally pleased with the speed change. But, he says, the real benefits of a managed solution are only just becoming clear for Gallagher Bassett.

"Using Claranet's managed solution will streamline Gallagher Bassett's administration. Not only can their IT staff focus on improving the network, rather than endlessly fixing it, the responsibility for keeping accurate records has also been transferred to Claranet technicians. We are able to repair and upgrade as soon as the need arises."

"Our managed solution is saving time and money," concludes Michael. "I'd certainly recommend that growing, dynamic businesses like ours take a look at their IT systems, and consider whether outsourcing to Claranet could do the same for them."

For further information, please visit :

www.gallagherbassett.co.uk

www.clara.net