



SPECIALTY FASHION GROUP OPENS UP CORE BUSINESS CHANNELS WITH AAPT NETWORK

"AAPT's decision to go with the highest performing ADSL links is bound to have an enormously liberating effect on the business. We feel the world will open up for us, and in business that's an important step forward."

Tim Greenstein, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, SPECIALTY FASHION GROUP

1 BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Sydney-based Specialty Fashion Group is the largest women's apparel retail group in Australia, employing about 4,000 staff. The company has 841 stores across Australia and New Zealand, selling under various brands including Millers, Katies, Autograph, Crossroads, City Chic and Queenspark.

Specialty Fashion Group wanted to move business-critical data more efficiently between head office and its large store network.

"Using dial-up modems to send sales data and stock control information was inefficient and could take a number of hours," says Tim Greenstein, Chief Information Officer, Specialty Fashion Group. "There were limitations placed on what we could send and how we could prioritise the sending and receiving of information.

"It was important that operational information, such as sales and stock information could be updated throughout the day so we could manage the business more proactively and cost-effectively."

The fashion group was also looking to communicate more effectively with staff and customers. "We were keen to create a seamless link between our stores and customer databases so we could improve the way we looked after customers in our stores," he adds. "We also wanted to be able to push marketing campaigns and promotions to stores at short notice."

The group determined it needed a fully managed broadband communications solution, with high-performance broadband links to its entire Australasian retail network.

2 SOLUTION FEATURES

Following a successful 20-site trial, Specialty Fashion Group has recently rolled out broadband infrastructure to each of its 841 stores at a rate of approximately 150 stores a month. The AAPT-hosted IP virtual private network (IPVPN) incorporates high-speed ADSL 1 and ADSL 2 links and Cisco routers.

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Tim Greenstein,
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KEY SOLUTION FEATURES

- 1. Comprehensive management**
responsible for managing the network solution end to end, AAPT kept Specialty Fashion Group informed with proactive notification of any network-related issues, in addition to providing specialised ongoing support through the AAPT Platinum helpdesk.
- 2. Quick response**
AAPT set competitive performance indicators with short response times, proactive network management and ongoing support.
- 3. Fixed price**
AAPT offered a simple pricing model, which provided a single fixed price for each store connected, regardless of its location.
- 4. Experienced team**
AAPT's project team successfully deployed the large-scale network to plan, managing 841 separate links. Awarded the contract in October 2009, the team worked proficiently to connect 60 stores ahead of the Christmas sales rush.
- 5. Trans-Tasman ties**
AAPT rolled out a broadband network that connected Specialty Fashion Group's Australian and New Zealand store networks.
- 6. Value for money**
AAPT deployed high-speed ADSL links up front. This meant the company wouldn't need to spend more money upgrading its network later, when demands on its communications increased.

FAST, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH CUSTOMERS, STAFF

"AAPT's team approach, combined with its robust management expertise, has laid the foundation for a positive working relationship, which will pay dividends for us in the short and long terms."

Tim Greenstein, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, SPECIALTY FASHION GROUP

AAPT'S IPVPN SOLUTION

3 THE RESULT

With AAPT's IPVPN solution, Specialty Fashion Group will communicate securely and reliably with its retail outlets across Australia and New Zealand in real-time – whether it's sending operational data such as sales and inventory, keeping staff informed, dealing more efficiently with customers or sending out marketing material.

"AAPT has brought our infrastructure into the 21st century," explains Greenstein. "Having a communications set-up more in line with other retailers enables our businesses to compete better in the fashion retail space."

More efficient operation

With AAPT's fast ADSL links, head office will have more immediate access to important operational data throughout the business day.

"AAPT's network will enable us to shift data back and forth between head office and our stores in real-time," explains Greenstein. "We can run the business more efficiently and with greater consistency, which is likely to deliver us cost savings around processes."

In time, the company sees further possible cost savings by reducing the number of PSTN lines connecting each store. "With the AAPT network it doesn't make sense to pay for multiple lines when you just need one to carry Voice and Data," says Greenstein.

Greenstein adds there may be further savings through reduced use of paper, as communications are increasingly handled online over the company's intranet, and the need for faxes, printed marketing material and other paperwork decreases.

Strong management, support

According to Greenstein, AAPT won the business because of its ability to proactively manage the network, along with the high level of care offered through AAPT's Platinum helpdesk.

"It takes a robust management team to handle a broadband network as large and geographically spread as ours," says Greenstein. "AAPT has proven it is more than up to the task, and if issues do arise, we have the confidence that AAPT's service team can deal with them in both a professional and timely manner."

Enhanced communications

The AAPT network will enable the company to link its point-of-sale systems to customer data, allowing staff to look up customer information quickly while they are in the store. The company will also be able to keep staff abreast of what's happening across the business through the fashion group's intranet, and send marketing and promotion materials more easily.

"We won't need to rely on fax, post or phoning stores if we want to run a promotion or send through a visual merchandising catalogue," he adds. "We just have to update the system and it will be available to all stores at the same time."

OVERVIEW

Specialty Fashion Group needed to upgrade its dial-up service to a broadband network to improve delivery of operational data as well as customer, staff and promotional communications.

The specialist women's apparel company installed an AAPT IP Virtual Private Network using ADSL 1 and ADSL 2 links with Cisco routers.

As a result, the fashion group can upload business data in real-time, post staff bulletins on the intranet, send promotions through to stores and link customer purchases to the company's customer database.

CHALLENGES:

- Out-of-date dial-up Internet
- Geographically dispersed retail network
- Quick turnaround prior to Christmas
- High level of service management

SUCCESSES:

- Strong project management
- Value for money
- Superior customer care
- Enhanced communications network

HOW CAN WE HELP YOUR BUSINESS SUCCEED?

Since 1991, AAPT has been delivering big results for businesses just like yours with our suite of Voice, Internet, Data and mobile solutions. With more flexibility, more personal service and simpler communication, you spend more time doing business and less time chasing telcos. As part of Telecom group of companies and one of the few Australian telcos with its own National network, AAPT offers you the reliability and value only possible through a tier one carrier.

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