



Customer Case Study



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Pan-European BT IP Clear Network is 'perfect fit' for International Fittings Manufacturer

When the IBP Group decided to re-evaluate their 11-site WAN, Abtec proved that they could deliver an end-to-end solution with a difference...



IBP is a leading manufacturer of fittings in domestic, commercial and industrial environments.

Partnerships with clients, building owners, designers, merchants & contractors ensure that IBP products provide highly cost-effective solutions to satisfy building requirements covering such applications as sanitary, heating, gas, solar heating, compressed air & liquid gas systems.

The company operates manufacturing facilities in the UK, Spain, Germany and Poland; and it has sales offices in these countries as well as France and Italy.

Through distributor and agency partnerships IBP is represented across Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and North Africa. IBP works closely with industry professionals throughout the building cycle.

Part of the Advanced Fluid Connections Group (formerly Oystertec), IBP's product portfolio offers a range of well-known jointing techniques and applications. These include compression, press, end feed, push-fit, termination and solder ring fittings. IBP is EN ISO 9001 certified and IBP prides itself on innovation and technology, environmental responsibility, technical support and customer service.

THE SITUATION:

Further to joining the Oystertec Group in 2001, IBP had been re-evaluating the business in order to streamline



operations. IT AS/400 data systems had been centralised at the corporate UK HQ in Tipton and the Group had standardised on a new ERP stock control system. By 2004, to further maximise efficiency, IBP now needed to evaluate their WAN connections that linked 11 of their sites across Europe.

Approximately 300 users need to be able to rely on the network on a day-to-day basis to access and exchange essential purchasing, finance, warehousing and stock control data; as well as being able to use the Internet and email. At the time, IBP was using a Frame Relay network with ISDN dial-up. From a new network solution, they required a more flexible, future-proof platform that offered better, yet affordable performance. Above all, IBP was looking for a provider that would take away the strain of having to deal directly with the network supplier.

Abtec are a Gold Level BT Distribution Partner, so they immediately fulfilled the first criteria. But could they supply a solution that delivered competitively priced end-to-end performance? Since Abtec had provided IBP with products & services in the past, IBP gave Abtec the chance to tender for the contract to review the WAN with recommendations on the best way to move forward.

Steve Wake, IT Manager at IBP explains: *"For our network improvements, we needed a provider that could really understand the challenges our organisation was facing. Dealing directly with the large network providers had given us problems in the past. Since Abtec partner directly with BT, Abtec were able to present us with a comprehensive solution that would enhance performance, help keep bandwidth costs down and enable us to utilise our existing routing equipment. As Abtec's proposal also encompassed a number of concepts that the other tenders hadn't, IBP were delighted to award Abtec the contract to project manage our pan-European network upgrade."*

KEY BENEFITS

High performance 11-Site BT IP Clear WAN

Flexible, cost effective & future proof platform

Integration with existing Cisco routing equipment

Network acceleration saves bandwidth

Back up, business continuity & DR policies

Project management for smooth transition

24x7 Maintenance Support for peace of mind



"BT IP Clear meets all of IBP's requirements - in terms of performance, flexibility and cost. We now have a standardised platform that we can easily add more sites to in future. Abtec met the needs of our roaming users particularly well by providing them with the facility to dial-in to the network over the Internet from anywhere in the world."

Steve Wake, IT Manager

APPLICATIONS

Stock Control System
AS/400

Web & Email Traffic
File & Print Sharing
Finance & Purchasing
Sales & Warehousing

THE SOLUTION:

BT ADSL IP Clear:

BT's IP Clear is a TCP/IP based Multi Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) VPN which provides significant cost savings compared to traditional Kilostream and Framestream based networks.



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"The Expands are a great concept, that none of Abtec's competitors offered to us. They are so much more cost-effective than having to shell-out on extra bandwidth. Abtec trialled the Expand units between Poland and the UK and obtained up-to a four-fold performance improvement, which was very impressive." Steve commented.

The IP Clear Service is a scalable platform that will provide any-to-any IP connectivity creating a secure VPN between all of IBP's sites and home workers. This reduces bottlenecks and has enabled Abtec to help IBP deploy a DR policy across the fully meshed network with minimal disruption.

ISDN Back-Up: To support IBP's three largest sites in Spain, Germany and Poland, Abtec designed a comprehensive back-up solution, so that any traffic affected by a fault on these IP connections is able to automatically switch to run over high speed digital ISDN. Abtec also delivered an alert system so that key IT staff at IBP are alerted via email if ISDN has been automatically initiated.

Cisco Routing:

In order to facilitate a converged IP VPN, yet preserve IBP's existing network investment, Abtec upgraded all of the Cisco routers already in place on the WAN in order to re-utilise them. The latest software was loaded and extra flash memory was added. At the central site, Abtec made use of Hot Standby Routing Protocol (HSRP), so that if the main router goes down, the network will automatically trip over to a spare Cisco unit.



The IP network also utilises ADSL, providing a secure, fast and always on connection to the Internet via the central site, enabling efficient and economical transmission of data. IBP particularly benefit from the ADSL access being provided on an uncontended basis, as they get a guaranteed service level agreement. Steve elaborates: *"The BT IP Clear network meets all of IBP's requirements – in terms of performance, flexibility and*

Expand: Since the performance:cost balance is crucial, Abtec used Expand Accelerator technology at the three most critical and heavily used sites to maximise performance, avoiding the need to purchase extra bandwidth. Expand capitalises on new layer 7QoS so repeat channel data is cut radically to free bandwidth and boost traffic speed.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE:



In order to control the network roll out and achieve a smooth transition for IBP, Abtec configured and project managed the network install one site at a time over a period of several months.

Steve explains: *"Teething problems with anything new are inevitable. It is how they are dealt with that matters. It is simply a case of finding what works best in certain situations. Yes, some of the Expand boxes did require upgrading during the installation, but Abtec were quick to do this."*

Steve continues: *"Thanks to Abtec's logical and methodical approach towards the install, IBP were able to gradually change over to the new network at a pace that suited us. The best thing about working with Abtec is that they took the burden away from us of having to deal directly with BT. Compared with past network projects, Abtec's proficient project management skills really made a difference. Abtec worked extremely hard from start to finish to keep us updated with all that we needed to know."*

Abtec fully maintain the hardware equipment on the network providing IBP with a four-hour response service. The UK HQ also have 24x7 cover, meaning they can contact Abtec 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To assist in immediate fault identification, Abtec also have modem dial access to all sites to allow remote problem diagnosis.

Steve concludes:

That's not to say that the project didn't pose any challenges. Not long into the installation project, Abtec had to upgrade the version of software on all of the Expand boxes in order for them to meet IBP's requirements.

"The maintenance support Abtec provide for IBP meets all of our requirements. If we have any issues at all, we contact Abtec and we are confident they will deal with the problem—whether it is dialling in to our network or contacting BT on our behalf."