

Artwork & Origination Plate Manufacturing Graphics Management



Contact
ORIGINATORS

The client

Contact Originators is a graphics management specialist, delivering an array of artwork and origination, plate manufacturing and graphics management services out of two purpose-built production units in Bredbury, Stockport. These incorporate an artwork studio using the latest leading automated workflow technologies, fully integrated into a management information system (MIS).

The background

Contact Originators' network was running a mixture of switch brands, including Netgear, Zyxel and some unknown brands for its CCTV. As the business had grown it had outgrown this piecemeal solution; the network was all 1GB and to the amount of data Contact Originators handles with large graphics files, this urgently needed improving.

The business's servers and storage area network (SAN) were similarly out of date.

The servers had reached the end of their lifespan and needed replacing, whilst the SAN was no longer giving the business the performance or capacity that it required due to fuel its ambitious growth.

Additionally, Contact Originators' WAN connectivity need upgrading. It was using a wireless leased line and Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS), but was limited to the 50Mbps internet breakout. Again, it needed something with more speed to meet the growing demands of the business.

With a move to a single new head office in the pipeline, Contact Originators had the perfect opportunity to address these multiple issues and streamline and centralise its IT infrastructure. The business had a managed IT services contract with APH, and called on our expert engineers to design and implement a new solution.

The solution

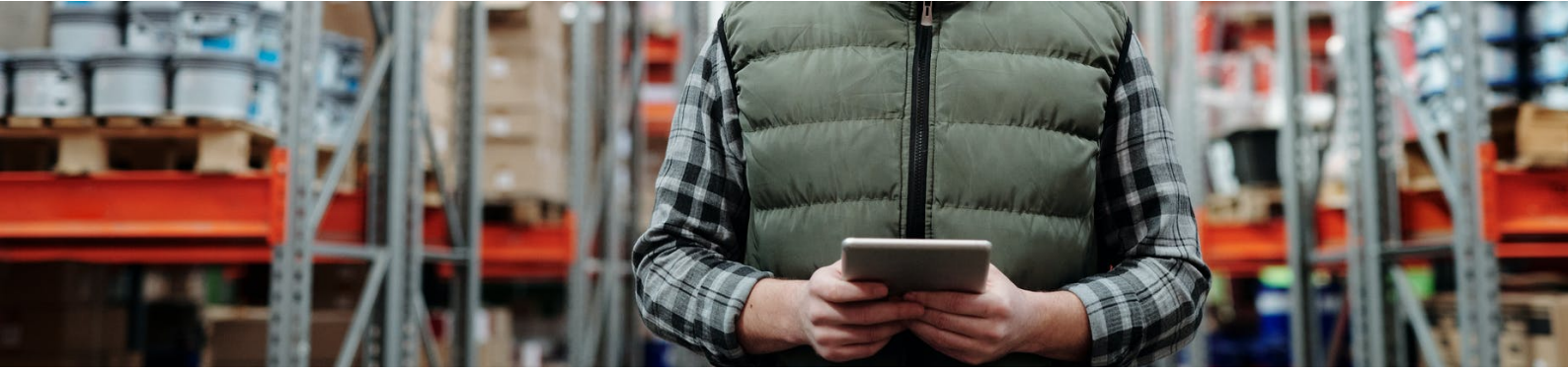
In order to address Contact Originators' outdated network, we began by implementing a full Dell networking stack with a 10GB backbone. All access switches within the new network have 10GB uplinks to the 10GB core switch to which all servers are connected. We also re-cabled the new site through, and implement two resilient 10GB iSCSI networks for the SAN also using Dell S series switches. Contact had also outgrown its original internal subnet, so this was changed and all services reconfigured for the new range.

All this immediately granted Contact Originators the increased network speed, capacity and resilience it required, whilst also streamlining and rationalising the overly complex legacy network.

Turning to Contact Originators' servers and SAN, we again used Dell PowerEdge servers and SC series SAN. We replaced the previous SAN with a new model, using a mixture of SSDs and HDDs for a balance of high capacity and performance. As the server changes were all required prior to the move to the new premises, all this was installed in the existing site on a temporary basis. Once the new premises were ready, the new installation was moved from the old site to the new. APH did this with little downtime to Contact and restored services with no issues within a single evening.

In terms of WAN connectivity, moving to the new site allowed the opportunity for APH to provide a 500Mbps leased line and SD-WAN solution for the remote sites using Meraki MX firewalls. The head office has a backup line with auto failover for the WAN connectivity. Similarly, the move to the single head office allowed us to implement our CloudBackup solution for far greater resilience in the event of outage or disaster. Contact Originators handles many TBs of data, so our usual per GB pricing did not suit, and we implemented a bespoke solution to allow the business greater storage at a lower price.





The results

Contact Originators is now enjoying a raft of benefits from its newly streamlined and upgraded IT infrastructure, all within its single new head office. Both the internal and external network infrastructures are both faster and more resilient, with better communication for remote sites. Contact Originators' server infrastructure is more resilient too, and this enables the business to make better use of automation systems. Data transfers save a great deal of staff time, enabling personnel to focus on more strategic or sales-focused tasks, and the offsite backup solution offers far greater data protection than the legacy approach.

Nick Mitchell, Operations Director at Contact Originators said: *"The benefits from this solution were felt immediately. We handle a huge amount of data at Contact Originators, and this is only going to increase as the possibilities for graphic design expand. Our new network is fast, high-capacity and reliable, with seamless management from APH's side and fantastic disaster recovery."*

Andrew Goodwin at APH said: *We have a longstanding relationship with Contact Originators and were delighted to help the business upgrade its internal and external network infrastructure in line with its move to new premises. The greater speed, agility and resilience we have enabled should help Contact Originators to expand and enhance its operations in the months and years ahead."*