

Voice

Case Study – Scarlet Couriers

Future-proof IP VPN solution for business continuity and improved efficiency.



Scarlet, one of the UK's largest independent courier companies has been providing a full service delivery solution to businesses across the Thames Valley for over 20 years. From their control centres in Slough, Bracknell, Reading and Uxbridge they offer their customers rapid response times and dependable service. With many large companies with headquarters in the Thames Valley area and a high demand for quality courier services to meet their requirements, Scarlet are able to list many household names on their client database.

When we first spoke, Scarlet had been undertaking a project to successfully network all four of their offices. As Les Parsons, Commercial Director at Scarlet explains: **'All four of our offices worked as separate entities. We wanted to improve business efficiency and maximise staff utilisation by linking all of our offices with one phone system. Our control office in Slough already had an Avaya system and we looked at connecting our other sites using a hosted solution.'**

Scarlet wanted a solution that would not only address their current set-up, but allow for future expansion and additional functionality as the need arose, so they decided to trial a

connectivity solution via hosted telephony. However, as the trial rolled out, Scarlet were left disappointed by the results.

According to Les: **'Call quality was poor at times, but even more of a problem to us were the outages that we suffered on a number of occasions which could last for several hours. Although a lot of our business is booked online, phone contact is still business-critical to us. Primarily, people tend to book direct couriers by phone and if customers are unable to get through, they will go elsewhere. Going forward, we simply could not afford the potential threat to this area of our business.'**

Cost was also another cause for concern as the hosted system incurred a monthly charge per seat. Although Scarlet were paying reduced trial rates, the system would have been considerably more expensive if they had continued.

One absolute requirement for Scarlet was to retain their existing phone numbers. This would immediately tell customers that they were a local business, with couriers nearby. **'It's important that people have the reassurance of knowing that Scarlet is a local company, and we wanted to keep this apparent through our phone numbers.'**

Les discussed the company's full requirements with Total and, following thorough consultation, an alternative solution was presented. Scarlet replaced their existing Avaya system in the Slough office and Total installed a second system into Bracknell, forming two hub sites. Then IP phones were installed in Reading and Uxbridge to create two smaller remote sites. Les adds: **'Total were very innovative and even went as far as investigating a wireless connectivity solution. It would have been ideal, but unfortunately the topology of one of our sites just made it impossible. Total instead created an IP VPN based on ADSL technology, which works every bit as well.'**

Scarlet's previous set-up carried Voice and Data through two separate networks, and originally they were looking at MPLS options. However, the single VPN installed by Total efficiently provides both Data and Voice across all offices, leaving no need to explore further avenues.

'We needed to terminate our hosted trial at a commercially viable point which left Total with a very short time to organise and deliver the chosen solution – but they worked tirelessly to ensure that the system was up and running on schedule. They went the extra mile to prioritise business continuity, and I am happy to say that the service we receive from them is very good.'

In terms of the capital expenditure incurred, the solution offered by Total also worked out to be significantly more cost-effective than previous options. This didn't surprise Les as he explains: **'I knew that this type of solution would be more cost-efficient. All our internal calls and calls across the group network are free, so there are obvious savings right there. And in terms of billing, all sites and services are now converged into one account, making it much easier to manage.'**

System reliability was also vital to Scarlet, so to ensure constant business continuity coverage, all calls to one of the hub sites can quickly be diverted to the other if an ISDN fails. Scarlet greatly value Avaya's functionality, having found it reliable and easy to use in the past. **'We wanted to have a system which would grow alongside the company. Avaya systems are relatively future-proof and simple to manage. They are flexible enough for future expansion – if further offices are required, a new system could simply be put into place through upgrade opportunities.'** With network and broadband technologies changing at such a fast pace, Scarlet are confident that their solution will develop and improve.

Les reports that Scarlet's primary objective is to be one step ahead of other courier services and provide superior customer service in order to differentiate themselves within the industry. **'We are now evaluating Call Centre software in order to maximise efficiency. With the service structure and support that is offered, Total would be the natural choice as our preferred Telecoms partner.'**

