Network upgraded to support luxury retailer's growth plans

Harvey Nichols

Harvey Nichols is an international luxury lifestyle store, renowned both in the UK and internationally for the breadth and depth of its exclusive fashion merchandise. It offers many of the world's most prestigious brands in womenswear, menswear, accessories, beauty and food.

Harvey Nichols' stores are based throughout the UK & Ireland - in London, Leeds, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Manchester and Dublin. The business continues to expand and grow, with its last store opening taking place in Bristol in 2008, and the company investigating further expansion opportunities. Harvey Nichols' London flagship store is located in the heart of Knightsbridge.

In addition to its fashion retailing business, Harvey Nichols successfully redeveloped the top floor of its Knightsbridge store to create a Restaurant, Bar, Café, Wine Shop and Foodmarket - which have become destinations in their own right. A similar concept operates from the top floors of all Harvey Nichols' full-size stores.

Harvey Nichols launched its first stand-alone restaurant in 1996, the highly successful Oxo Tower Restaurant, Bar and Brasserie, with spectacular views of the River Thames. A further restaurant, Prism, opened in the financial district of the City of London in 1999.

The challenge

Claranet originally worked with Harvey Nichols over five years ago, providing managed connectivity to the retailer. This situation changed when Harvey Nichols began to add new sites to its network and increased the data volume that ran across it. At this time, the retailer decided to switch to a much larger network provider who, it was believed, would be better equipped to manage the service. Yet soon after making this move, Harvey Nichols began to experience difficulties with its new supplier in terms of network flexibility and service levels. This led to the retailer switching back to Claranet for an upgraded service that would meet its evolving networking needs.

"Although we were very impressed with the networking solution Claranet provided us some five years ago, we made the mistake of thinking that when it came to a more complex networking solution, we would be better off with a bigger service provider," said Matthew Suddock, Infrastructure Manager at Harvey Nichols.

"What we found though was that the new network operator wasn't able to maintain the same level of service that we had experienced with Claranet. This in turn meant that network upgrades and changes were difficult to make, and it ultimately led us to look for another provider."

In the interim period between working with Claranet, Harvey Nichols experienced significant demand for increased capacity and more intelligent management of data. This was largely driven by the introduction of a new customer loyalty system and a new CRM system. The use of these two systems was, and still is, central to Harvey Nichols' business development as they help the retailer to maintain the highest levels of customer satisfaction. For example, by capturing customer transactions and storing this information in its CRM system, Harvey Nichols is able to continually improve its customer loyalty scheme and the benefits it can provide to customers. This means that having the most reliable, secure

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and flexible network to support customer transactions and to store data is crucial to business growth. Network security is also important to Harvey Nichols as it needs to protect customer data and secure card holder information as part of its PCI-DSS compliancy. Harvey Nichols also needs to preserve the intellectual property that this data represents.

The solution

Explaining the reasons Harvey Nichols chose Claranet, Suddock said, "We were disappointed by our incumbent provider and looked for a company that could not only give us a similar solution, but also be highly responsive, flexible, and able to match our dedication to excellent customer service. Remembering the high level of service we had previously received from Claranet, we decided to get them back to manage our whole network infrastructure. We knew we would be in safe hands."
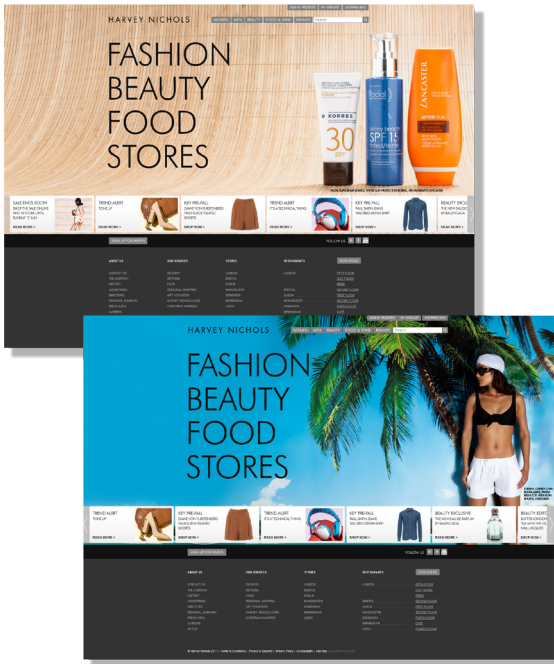
Harvey Nichols has entered into a five year agreement with Claranet, over which time the service can be flexed and scaled to match business growth. The company currently has 11 sites, including its two restaurants, all of which are managed centrally as one group on the same MPLS service. Claranet will look after the Wide Area Network (WAN), which will include Local Area Networks (LANs), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and a virtualised testing environment.

The service from Claranet has involved an upgrade of the existing infrastructure, with additional bandwidth provided to support anticipated company growth. This is necessary as expansion will result in an exponential increase in data that the organisation needs to collect, manage and protect.

Furthermore, as Claranet's data centres are PCI-DSS compliant and allow customers to meet several sections of the security standard's criteria, Harvey Nichols' compliance burden is significantly reduced. This, along with the reliability, security and flexibility of Claranet's service, has enabled Suddock and his team to focus time and resources on new projects and IT development.

The benefits

"Claranet has been able to deliver a reliable, secure, flexible and robust networking solution that can readily scale to cope with the ever-evolving bandwidth requirements of Harvey Nichols. The built-in headroom of the current solution means that the retailer can utilise spare capacity to manage patching and maintenance more effectively and during timeframes that suit the business, rather than having to wait for quiet periods when demand is not so high."

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>
> **Matthew Suddock,**
> **Infrastructure Manager at Harvey Nichols**

"We have significantly benefited from an improvement in the reports we can produce using the Claranet system," added Suddock. "Some of the solutions we looked at had very niche applications and weren't always able to offer suitable metrics for monitoring how the service was working. With Claranet we are now able to quickly and easily produce reports that provide an overview of system usage and any potential problem areas."

Suddock also believes that Harvey Nichols benefits from being of a similar size to Claranet. "In all of our interactions with the team at Claranet, we feel that we are an important customer, and that they have respect for the relationship. We know that, should we need it, we have access to the most senior executives in the business. This is invaluable to us. It's important to have that level of commitment from an organisation when we are staking so much of our future success on this investment."

For more information about Harvey Nichols, please go to: www.harveynichols.com

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