REMOTE BUSINESS FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE

When Farmlands looked to upgrade its network in 2001, it turned to Napier Computing Systems (NCS). At that time Farmland's 35 branches (95% of which were situated in remote locations) were each using individual Linux servers and transferring information to and from head office by couriering tapes overnight. NCS installed a Cisco solution which operated over ADSL and enabled the branches to not only transfer data seamlessly with head office but take advantage of internet services as they came on line. As the branches are in remote locations standard ADSL lines were the only connection available to them. The Cisco solution proved very effective but no-one could have predicted the overload that email and online ordering would place on the infrastructure. It became evident in 2008 that slow intranet and internet speeds were starting to adversely affect productivity.

Once again NCS was called in to assess the situation and look at ways to improve the speed on the old ADSL lines without disrupting the network. There wasn't an obvious answer as Farmlands couldn't afford for any branch, let alone all of them, to be down while an upgrade took place. The Ingram Micro Showcase event in Wellington gave both NCS and its client an opportunity to review some possible solutions. While a number of options were considered the new Fortinet product Fortigate stood out: it enabled increased speed over standard ADSL; created a secure environment where regularly used sites, such as the online ordering portal, could be directly accessed by branches; operated via a wireless environment; and was compatible with Cisco.

Marty Akers from NCS explained that identifying Fortigate as a possibility was only the start of the discussion. "John Marshall Ingram Micro's Fortinet specialist got together with fellow System Architect and Cisco expert, Darryl Tyson and they couldn't have been more helpful", he says. "Fortigate was a brand new product that I hadn't used and we had no experience in integrating it with Cisco. I just wouldn't have been able to put this together without Ingram Micro's help."

John and Darryl worked with Marty to design a solution and as there were no case studies, tested it in-house. The products were then lent to NCS for installation in a pilot Farmlands branch. Marty and his team worked overnight and staff only became aware of the upgrade when they noticed much faster online speeds the next day. "The NZDSL testing demonstrated a 30-40% speed increase" says Marty, "and I believe that at least this level of improvement was achieved in the pilot and the solution exceeded initial expectations in a number of other ways.

"The ability to create a wireless environment has become increasingly important. Not only are branch managers becoming more mobile but the cabling in many of the branches was maxed out so it would have been both expensive and extremely disruptive to have to install new cable," he explains. "Being able to work with the existing Cisco backbone has also let us progressively roll-out the upgrade with zero disruption to any of the branches along the way. It is business as usual for everyone but it is business much faster than usual for those branches that are upgraded."

John Marshall and Darryl Tyson continue to work closely with Marty and his team' at NCS as the 35 Farmlands branches are rolled out. "I have been able to call or email them with a problem and they get back to me within 10-15 minutes every time. I will say it again; we just couldn't have done this without them."

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> **Marty Akers**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:

- ADSL Termination provided by:
  Cisco 800 series routers at over 30 sites
- Branch network protection and secure browsing provided by:
  Fortinet's FortiGate Unified Threat Management Appliances

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