

Case Study

Fleet Street Travel

For major corporate travel company Fleet Street Travel, reliable and secure connections are vital. Clients require one point of reference for all their corporate travel needs, not just for booking their travel plans. Travel consultants therefore need to have a wide knowledge of the different suppliers and products they offer e.g. classes of travel, airline lounges, hotel facilities, etc., plus destination information, ancillary services such as passport, visa and currency and general travel advice. So when it came to choosing a network that offered both security and compatibility the company turned to Equinet for a solution based on their NetPilot's key strengths - UTM and VPNs.



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www.fleetstreet.co.uk

Changes in the IT network at Fleet Street Travel were driven by changes in the marketplace, emails were suddenly replacing telephone calls and people wanted to use the Internet to book online. IT Manager James Baldwin comments "Commercially we had to move with the times. We had to evolve and invest in e-commerce with online bookings in order to retain our place in a competitive market".

Fleet Street Travel is one of the largest independent corporate travel management companies in the UK, with a multimillion pound turnover. With blue chip client accounts ranging in size from £10k to £7m per annum, the company was recently nominated 'Best independent travel agent'. Headquartered in Chertsey, Surrey it employs over 150 staff across four offices with a call centre based in Ireland, they recently expanded into Europe with the acquisition of a travel agency based in the Netherlands. In the spring of 2005, the company opened prestigious premises in London's Fleet Street.

The internet, email and the centralisation of data are vital tools for staff in handling customer enquiries. "Meeting, and even exceeding, our very exact customer Service Level Agreements is core to our success and speedy internet access is a critical element for our business. There is no room for system failure because delay could mean lost contracts," explains James.

The company had been using a dial-up Internet service which picked up emails at intervals during the day using a Microsoft Exchange server, an MS Outlook client, a firewall and a proxy server. There was very heavy usage of the Internet and the bandwidth was quickly used up.

James continues "In the past staff complained that emails and browsing were sometimes slow. We discovered some staff were browsing news and sports channels - getting live updates on the cricket, for example. We recognized we needed more bandwidth, but the solution was not increased capacity, but better understanding and management of our Internet requirements and usage".

To facilitate this Fleet Street Travel opted for NetPilot Enterprise and NetPilot Plus because of their security credentials - offering a combined firewall, VPN, content web filtering and anti-virus scanning as well as a router, firewall, email server, cache plus a web, file and print server. Ease of use and reliability were other key factors, as were compatibility with multiple WAN interfaces, since Fleet Street Travel's branches are equipped with a mixture of leased lines, ADSL and ISDN connections of varying capacity.

"Since we have been using NetPilot Enterprise systems, and have adopted a usage policy with two levels of access, this has made a big difference - our SLA requirements are on target and consultants don't get sidetracked" adds James.

To enhance the system, the company deployed NetPilot's content filtering mechanism at all their locations which immediately increased productivity and minimised bandwidth utilisation. Allowing staff to receive only relevant web content ensured that the IT department was not inundated with queries concerning the time delay in the delivery and receipt of emails, or the slow pace of web browsing. Moreover, from a customer service perspective, NetPilot is also helping the company's branches to speed up response times through quicker access to up-to-date travel information.

Equinet NetPilot Enterprise units are now running at each of Fleet Street's five sites, with a NetPilot Plus box providing back up. Front, mid and back office systems including email have been successfully centralised over a VPN.

Having VPN connectivity at its offices in London, Knutsford, Newcastle and in the call centre in Ireland plus in its Chertsey headquarters, as part of an 'all in one box' UTM appliance solution, has worked well for Fleet Street Travel. It is a straightforward way of providing data encryption to prevent transmissions being intercepted or tampered with. In addition, trapping viruses at the gateway has been 100 per cent successful, and the company is reassured that URLs are also checked.

In parallel, the company has taken the sensible precautionary measure of disabling CD-ROM drives on its PCs to avoid viruses entering the company at this point. Meanwhile, the anti-virus system on the gateway gives the confidence of updates every 15 minutes, with no manual intervention necessary.

IT is the company's single biggest investment and E-Commerce was a major development, but according to James the benefits have been huge. The Internet service is reliable and the Checkmark accredited firewall, anti-virus, anti-spam and URL filtering, keep the company operational 365 days a year.

In James Baldwin's opinion "All operations are PC-based so IT is business-critical - a virus would cripple the network and our business so we have built-in contingency. I'm more than happy with NetPilot because it provides a reliable and comprehensive UTM security solution that has kept the system completely virus-free. The thing I love about NetPilot is how easy it is to install and maintain. If we have a problem with email in Newcastle or the Netherlands, I can access the desktop remotely and take control of their web station to fix the problem within minutes".

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