



THE BRADFORDS GROUP

South West Communications Group completely overhauls The Bradford Group's communications and IT systems with a cost-effective, fully supported converged solution that enhances their everyday operations and improves customer service.

The Bradfords Group comprises of Bradfords Building Supplies, Bradfords Tool Hire, Bradfords Kitchen & Bathrooms plus Snows Timber, Crendon Timber Engineering, and YPS with more than 50 branches stretching from Cornwall to West Yorkshire making them one of the UK's leading names in the industry.

Bradfords needed to revolutionise their business communications in conjunction with the end of the contract for their existing hosted multi-tenanted telephone solution. In addition, the local area networks (LAN) at their branches were aging and sourced from a range of mismatched manufacturers. Their broadband-based wide area network (WAN) was also very unreliable, which had a negative impact on their telephony services and their everyday business operations.

They used a tender process to find a standout supplier capable of delivering a quality and high availability 24/7 network and telephony services to meet all their business requirements and to improve their customer service. They wanted to invest in another OPEX financed solution and needed it to be deployed before the end of their existing telephony contract.

After swcomms was successfully selected, we began to deploy our solution with our purpose-built data centre as its centrepiece hosting all of Bradfords' business systems providing an infrastructure as a service (IaaS) and platform as a service (PaaS) to overhaul their legacy servers.

This meant the care of their server hardware and the VMware virtualised environment that hosts the applications used by all the group's companies is now supplied as a managed service and has alleviated the day to day tasks associated with looking after an IT infrastructure.

The result is that all the branches benefit from a central source for all their business systems. They are also backed up to Bradfords' comms room at head office in Yeovil to provide a disaster recovery solution.

All branches are connected to the data centre and head office-hosted business systems via a new primary MPLS WAN which offers far superior connectivity. The minimum requirement was for fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) connections, but swcomms was able to supply a network made up of fibre leased lines and ethernet in the first mile (EFM) services from a single network provider. These connections benefit from enhanced service level agreements (SLAs) - hours rather than days - that are simply not available with broadband. Every site has a secondary back-up link from a different carrier to ensure 100% availability.

We overhauled the branch LANs with new cabling and cabinets containing Cisco routers and Cisco Meraki switches, firewalls and access points that can be easily managed across the estate with a web-based portal. This also gives Bradfords' IT team visibility of corporate and guest devices using their Wi-Fi.

The portal gives Bradfords' marketing team valuable intelligence on number of new and returning visitors, time spent in store and in what areas to optimise customer engagement and to plan store design and staffing numbers. It collates email addresses, prompts Facebook check-ins and uses Bluetooth beaconing to tempt customers into their stores with special offers and persuasive text messages to create 'the branch of the future'.

Wi-Fi was needed as a critical part of their new ERP production software used by Snows Timber. Handheld scanners allow for stock taking, stock movements and processing of materials to be updated in real time by staff working in yards and warehousing on sites measuring up to 120,000sq ft – the equivalent of 20 rugby pitches. Again, Bradfords' IT team has visibility of the location and performance of every access point and scanner from their portal.

“I was not with the Bradfords Group when the contract was awarded to **swcomms**, however I now appreciate why so many services were entrusted to them. After 27 years working in IT, spanning multiple sectors, it is reassuring to work with a communications company who are themselves great at communication.

“For obvious reasons IT is largely concerned with technology and systems, but like any business is reliant on the capability and dedication of staff. **swcomms** have skilled and approachable employees whose values very much mirror those of our own.”
Group IT Director Jonathan Chard

Back in our data centre, we also host a new **VoIP telephone system** on their new virtualised platform. The single platform serves the entire group with everyday administration tasks managed by the IT team without the cost or delay of third party engineers.

Their strategic investment in a Mitel UC solution gives Bradfords a resilient phone system with easy call forwarding, automated attendant for every branch, work groups, voicemail options and **unified communications features**, such as voicemail-to-email integration, instant messaging, click-to-dial and conference calling with the option to integrate with video services in the future. The Mitel UC is primed for growth too, as this solution can accommodate up to 20,000 users.

It also supports Bradfords' mobility requirements by providing hot-desking capabilities, the ability for a mobile or a PC-softphone to be used as a telephone extension when staff members are away from their desks.

Bradfords now enjoy a cloud-based call logging and reporting tool to monitor call traffic, response times, missed calls, manage billing etc to ensure staff numbers are correct and to maintain excellent customer service.

swcomms migrated Bradfords from their hosted lines and calls service to **SIP trunks** to reduce their call costs with an inclusive package to local, national and mobile numbers. We were able to transfer all their existing numbers to a load-balanced SIP service, which also offers enhanced disaster recovery options, improved SLAs and flexible numbering options.

The delivery of this project took **significant planning and engineering resource**, especially as the existing telephony contract was due to run out within five months from contract sign-off. Despite this tight timeframe, our PRINCE2- accredited project management team and engineers deployed the solution on time and within budget while our trainers ensured all staff members were able to make full use of their new communications and IT solution from day one.

Bradfords' invitation to tender resulted in a major overhaul of their entire communications and IT systems from the ground up. Every high availability element is **completely reliable and resilient** which means staff can confidently manage and draw on critical, centralised resources to improve the way they run each business and department within the group with the collective aim of improving their customer service.

All the elements were deployed by **swcomms**, a single supplier, who is the only point of contact for this future-proofed solution.

We now deliver multi-faceted support for Bradfords. This comprises of a four-priority reporting system with 'Priority one' being an issue that effects more than 20% of Bradfords' entire system. Priority two to four are for lesser faults.

Bradfords has fault response and fault resolution times written into their contract, and we have achieved a 100% success in meeting these.

swcomms also employs a head of support to oversee the entire Bradfords contract and to give them a named main point of contact for any fault that may arise from any of the above elements of their solution.

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