Asprea
AppGate proves the key for smooth restructuring & outsourcing

Quick facts

Organization
- Property Insurance Company

Challenges
- Business continuity during organizational restructuring
- Ensure network security and business protection when using third party contractors

Solution
- AppGate system provides a ready-made platform for 3rd party access to data and applications while protecting Aviva's network from unauthorized access.
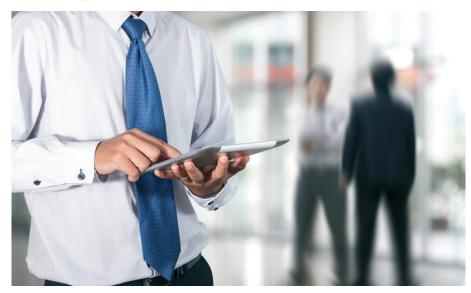
Benefits
- Secure access for all users
- Work from any location
- Strong security
- High availability & business continuity
- Easy to use and manage

Background

Asprea is one of the largest property insurance claims companies in the UK. Now wholly owned by Aviva, the UK's largest provider of insurance services, Asprea was until very recently part of the Carillion Facilities Management Group. Asprea was launched in 2006 to provide an outsourced property claims management service, handling buildings insurance claims exclusively for Aviva. In July 2010, Aviva took the decision to buy the Asprea business from Carillion and a project team led by Adrian Bunn, Senior Project Manager for Aviva, started work on transitioning Asprea's operations to Aviva.

The Challenge

Ensure business continuity during restructuring: Asprea's operations were closely integrated with Carillion, sharing IT resources, back-office systems and the customer-support call-center services. Support teams in Carillion accessed Asprea's systems, applications and databases via a direct link between the two networks. However, the two networks needed to be decoupled to facilitate the transition and this would potentially disrupt these essential customer support and IT services. The challenge was how to separate the two networks and still enable Carillion to continue delivering support during the transition.

Ensure network security & business protection: As part of the transition, IT & applications support would be outsourced to a new provider. This company, and Asprea's network of 3rd party contractors and agents who provided property repair & maintenance services would all require access to Asprea's network. For example, property restorers and repairers would need access to customer claims data; IT support staff would require access to systems and applications to provide Help Desk and maintenance services. The Asprea systems were being moved onto the Aviva network. The challenge was how to provide external suppliers with access to the resources they needed while at the same time protecting Aviva's networks against unauthorized access.

Solution

Somerford Associates, specialists in network security, had worked with Carillion previously to install Cryptzone's AppGate remote access solution. Clustered AppGate Security Servers were being used to provide secure remote access for Asprea's field-based surveyors and inspectors. The AppGate system provided the functionality and flexibility required not only for enabling a smooth transition of the business but also for long term network security and 3rd party access control. "We realised that we could achieve all our objectives by using the AppGate system", said Bunn. "We would extend remote access to Carillion's support staff for the duration of the transition, and then to all of our 3rd party contractors for the long term."

Secure remote access: With the AppGate system it is just as easy to provide secure access for external users as it is for internal employees. Also IP tunneling allows AppGate to support any application, so remote users can work seamlessly from any location. Bunn's team established that external support teams would be able to provide the same levels of service using remote access through the AppGate security server. The central management console meant that secure access could be set up quickly for approved external support staff, and there was no need to retain the fixed link between the corporate networks.

Protection against unauthorized access: The AppGate system provided a ready-made platform for providing 3rd party contractors and suppliers with secure access to the data and applications they needed. Administrators can control precisely which services and systems each authorized user is able to access. Access to other assets on the network is automatically blocked, thus protecting Aviva's network from unauthorized access. In addition, AppGate supports a wide range of client platforms – laptop, home computer, PDA or mobile phone – so contractors are able to connect from any location on any device; and the intuitive user interface means that little user training is required.

Flexibility helps deliver service improvements: In addition to enabling the transition from Carillion, AppGate's technology is providing additional benefits to Asprea. Secure remote access means that many Asprea employees no longer need to be office based, and can spend more time working directly with customers delivering better service. 3rd party IT support staff don't need to come to site to monitor or maintain systems. They simply log in from wherever they are based, onshore or offshore. "Asprea maintains control of who comes onto the network, when, and what they are able to do", says Bunn. "If they flag a fault we can quickly provide secure remote access to the relevant contractor to sort out the problem, and then close it again when they've finished so we can be certain that we don't have people on our network who don't need to be."

Business continuity when disaster strikes: AppGate is now also the central technology employed for Asprea's ongoing business continuity plan. Asprea was previously based in six locations and is now on a single site. If the business was ever to lose it's new headquarters due a disaster such as fire or flooding, office workers would simply relocate to a contractually agreed 'dark' site nearby where there are a number of desks, telephones and PC's with internet access, ready to logon using AppGate – and carry on working, business as usual.

Bunn explained that Asprea's business continuity plan had already been put to the test. "During the severe snow in 2010 staff could not reach the office or get to customers. Instead, they stayed at home and logged into office systems using AppGate, calling customers to sort things out over the phone. We used AppGate's 50 user, 50 day Business Continuity License to cover the additional, short term growth in concurrent users. It took less than one hour to arrange and install. As a result Asprea was able to keep working when much of the country was at a standstill due to snow and ice."

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