

HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY PUTS OFFICERS BACK IN NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH BLUE COAT PROXYSG APPLIANCES

Accelerates Access to Centralized Files for Mobile Officers and Employees across Two Counties

Hampshire Constabulary is responsible for policing Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in Southern England and aims to provide excellent service to the communities it serves.

Behind this public commitment is the Information Technology and Communications (ITC) service, which connects 7,000 employees working between 85 police sites across two counties. Many smaller, local police stations are located in converted housing – some of which are listed buildings – and many officers have no fixed workspace but need to access numerous applications while on the move. All 85 sites and mobile employees are supported by two main head-office data centres.

Poor Application Performance Keeps Officers Off the Streets

Supporting such a large number of locations with nearly 100 centralised applications, including print and file services, resulted in a poor user experience.

In 2006, Tony Hutchings, senior network engineer for Hampshire Constabulary, was tasked with finding a solution to the poor application performance.

He said: “Part of the problem was that many of the local police stations have very limited space that couldn’t accommodate print and file servers while the links connecting the outlying offices to head office ranged between 128 kbps and 32 mbps links.”

“In the absence of local print and file servers, which were impractical from a cost and management perspective, police officers

were forced to log on to a remote server. This resulted in painfully slow application performance that kept them in the office and reduced the time they could spend on patrol in their neighbourhoods.”

In addition to being cost prohibitive, installing and managing print servers at each police station posed an unacceptable security risk. Any deployment would have required metal cages, which would require extra ventilation and cooling and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS).

WAN Acceleration Answers the Call

Hutchings and his team had already been considering other WAN acceleration products when they heard about the Blue Coat ProxySG appliances at a seminar presented by security specialist and Blue Coat channel partner Integralis. The Integralis Professional Services team, led by David Elevique, carried out a detailed, month-long audit before recommending the ProxySG appliances and ProxyClient software for remote and mobile users.

“Blue Coat appliances provide not just the standard suite of optimization technologies but also advanced caching tools for a more comprehensive approach to accelerating applications and content to both our remote office locations and our mobile officers. With the ProxySG appliances, we were also able to deploy ProxyClient software on laptops for all of our mobile officers at no additional cost, which allowed us to maximize our limited budget resources.”

ORGANIZATION

Hampshire Constabulary
www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/

INDUSTRY

Local Government

CHALLENGE

A slow log on process to centralized applications, such as print and file services, bogged police down in administrative tasks and paperwork, limiting the time they spent in the field.

HIGHLIGHT/BENEFIT

Hampshire Constabulary deployed Blue Coat ProxySG appliances and ProxyClient software to accelerate application delivery for 7,000 employees across two counties, dramatically reducing log on times from 20 minutes to a few seconds.



Utilizing a combination of caching, protocol optimization, bandwidth management and compression, the ProxySG appliances dramatically improved application performance to reduce log on times from as much as 20 minutes to only a few seconds.

For local police offices that are typically in rural locations with very low bandwidth and only two to three computers, the ProxyClient solution was ideal. In these offices, officers drop in occasionally to access emails and write reports in between patrolling what are often large, sprawling beats. With ProxyClient on laptops, officers at these sites have a similar user experience as they would in a site with a ProxySG appliance. Hutchings anticipates a broader roll out of the ProxyClient, which is free with the ProxySG appliance, and expects it to become part of the standard build for police department laptop computers.

With Blue Coat Reporter, the network support team has visibility into which applications or protocols are being used and can review bandwidth and traffic utilization alongside any complaints received by the help desk. Reporter shows where traffic congestion exists and which users are having application performance issues, providing valuable information for quickly and efficiently troubleshooting any issues.

ProxySG Appliances Drive Productivity Gains

Following the deployment, the network team is in agreement about the benefits of the Blue Coat solution. The support team is no longer inundated with complaints about slow response times, and remote sites are enjoying faster times for printing and file sharing.

A user commented: "Before [the Blue Coat deployment] we would enter our passwords and then have time to make a cup of tea before the computer had logged in. Log-in times are now counted in seconds."

"The Blue Coat solution minimises the amount of time and effort involved in accessing applications and printing forms, which any officer will tell you is the least favourite part of their job," Hutchings said.

"For Hampshire Constabulary, this has resulted in productivity gains. Police officers want to limit the amount of time they spend filling in forms, and increase the time they can spend on their beat. Having a slow or troublesome application only extends the amount of time wasted on such administrative tasks."

Free Bandwidth for New Applications

According to the network support team, the Blue Coat solution proved that bandwidth limitations were not the problem, as is often assumed in such situations. By streamlining print and file services, even third-party applications are enjoying improved application performance.

Hutchings said: "Using applications, such as those for resource management that schedule police officers' time, have become much faster and trouble-free. The performance of our in-house, web-based application for evidence archiving has also improved, and opening shared files is quicker."

In the future, Hutchings foresees further deployment of Blue Coat appliances, citing additional requirements for high bandwidth applications, like video streaming, which are planned once the force has upgraded its Internet links.

Hutchings concludes: "Ultimately, the Blue Coat solution makes life easier for me and my team and also for the users who can now focus on providing an excellent service, catching criminals and being active in neighbourhoods."

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