

## case study: managed private IP service

# Ahlstrom Corporation Turns to Verizon Business for Essential Operational Resilience

### Company Background and Industry

Ahlstrom is an innovative organisation with specialised technical expertise—and some 500 patents—in the production of natural and synthetic fibre-based specialty papers and non-woven materials. Its products are used by major industrial and consumer businesses around the world to make everyday items such as filters, wipes, flooring, labels and tapes. Ahlstrom is a truly global company, with sites across four continents as far apart as Finland, Brazil, South Korea and the US.

### Introduction

With over 6,000 employees in more than 20 countries, Ahlstrom needs a reliable global infrastructure to facilitate close collaboration between its offices, production plants, suppliers and customers. Jouko Jurvainen, Ahlstrom's CIO, explains: "Critical functions such as production planning and supply-chain logistics are run from a few core sites, so if a production plant loses its connection to the network, it quickly loses its ability to continue production and meet customer delivery requirements. And fundamental communication and business support processes such as e-mail and SAP are centrally managed, so our people can only do their jobs if the corporate network is there for them."

### Situation

By August 2006, network resilience had become a serious concern for Ahlstrom, prompting the company to invite six leading providers—including its incumbent network provider and Verizon Business—to tender for a replacement corporate network service. Ahlstrom's existing network was a MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) service—the de facto standard for efficient wide-area networks in large businesses. Ahlstrom had migrated to this network in 2004 and was generally happy with the solution, but found that the ISDN backup it used for resilience was inadequate for the company's business continuity needs.

*"As well as providing the top-end performance we were looking for, we've worked out that, even with the cost of the migration project included in the calculation, the total cost of ownership of the Verizon Business solution will work out less over three years than the service it replaced."*

**JOUKO JURVAINEN, CIO, AHLSTROM CORPORATION**

Markku Kuronen, Ahlstrom's IT development manager, explains: "The switchover from primary connection to ISDN often failed to happen when required. Nor could we get sufficient bandwidth on the ISDN connections to cope with our performance needs. But ISDN was the only resilience solution offered as standard by our incumbent provider. So we decided to look at alternatives."

### Selection

Ahlstrom's key evaluation criteria were a reliable resilience solution, good quality of service (QoS) in prioritising critical from non-critical traffic, and overall cost of service. While QoS provision was consistently good among the candidates, only one service provider offered the right combination of price and a confidence-inspiring resilience solution: Verizon Business.

### Ahlstrom Corporation Helsinki, Finland

#### Business Challenges

- Providing seamless operations across a growing number of sites on four continents
- Replacing an unreliable ISDN resilience solution

#### Network Solution

- Managed Private IP network solution
- Fully redundant, load-sharing dual connection for resilience at critical sites
- Secure Gateway Small Office service for resilience at other sites
- Quality of service to enable traffic prioritisation

#### Business Value

- **Migrate.** A smooth transition to an improved, more cost-effective MPLS network infrastructure.
- **Secure.** The right resilience solution for seamless business continuity.
- **Grow.** New locations and applications can be introduced with ease onto the Private IP network.

“When we assessed the Verizon Business proposition we knew it was right for us, and when we met with the Verizon Business team we knew they were the right people for us,” says Kuronen. “The resilience solution exactly matched our requirements and the service levels and pricing were excellent. What was especially pleasing was how flexible they were and how they listened to our needs, for example by providing us with the router access we wanted as part of the solution.”

### The Verizon Business Solution

Verizon Business provided its Private IP service (a layer-three MPLS-based virtual private network) and Managed Network Services to 25 Ahlstrom sites. Five sites—regarded as ‘critical’ because they are hubs for important business functions such as e-mail, SAP and internet connectivity—received two fully redundant, load-sharing leased-line connections directly into two different points of presence (PoPs) on the Verizon Private IP backbone. When working together, the two connections provide ample capacity for each site’s needs even if traffic is unusually high. If one connection goes down, the other can handle the site’s normal traffic load on its own, providing full resilience in the event of failure at any point from the on-site router to the PoP.

For Ahlstrom’s 20 other sites, Verizon Business installed one leased-line PIP connection and provided the Verizon Secure Gateway Small Office (SGSO) service as a backup for resilience. SGSO allows for secure access to the Private IP network via an Internet gateway. Each site has an always-on local Internet connection to Verizon’s secure gateway, which is only used if the primary PIP connection becomes unavailable.

The combination of dual leased lines for critical sites and cost-effective SGSO backup for all other sites gives Ahlstrom the reliability it needs, while also addressing its performance and budgetary considerations. Although failure of the primary connection is rare, when it does happen, cutover from primary to backup occurs automatically and seamlessly. Unlike its previous ISDN backup solution, Ahlstrom can monitor the SGSO backup connections; and Verizon Business also proactively monitors all connections and provides an alert if there are any problems on either a primary or backup connection.

### Results

With sites spread across the world, Ahlstrom expected the migration to Verizon Business to have its fair share of delays and unanticipated problems. But careful planning and the extensive geographical reach of the Verizon Business operation made all the difference in ensuring a smooth migration for all of Ahlstrom’s sites. When the company acquired two new facilities during the migration project, these sites were quickly added to the network using the SGSO service as their primary connection, until they can be fully integrated by Ahlstrom into the business.

“The migration experience was extremely positive,” Kuronen reveals. “We migrated each site during working hours and both users and the IT department agree that the change took place without disruption to everyday operations.

“It has been the same story on the rare occasions when we’ve had reason to test the SGSO backup service. The automatic cutover has been so smooth, users have not even realised that anything has happened.”

This reliability of service is matched by performance and value, as CIO Jurvainen confirms: “As well as providing the top-end performance we were looking for, we’ve worked out that, even with the cost of the migration project included in the calculation, the total cost of ownership of the Verizon Business solution will work out less over three years than the service it replaced.”

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