

The Situation

Founded in 1988, Close Motor Finance (CMF) offers finance and insurance services for a large network of motor dealerships across the UK. Headquartered in Doncaster, CMF has grown over time to 13 branch offices, and continues to grow their operations regularly. Today CMF provides its services to a network of more than 5000 motor dealers nationwide.

Supporting this network of branch offices is no easy task and is totally reliant on access to the latest information on the company's corporate IT systems, which are located at the head office in Doncaster. If any branch office is unable to connect to these resources, it has a serious impact on the company's ability to service their wide customer base.

The Solution

Dave Coleman, the Head of IT for Close Motor Finance, needed to implement a disaster recovery system by replicating all of the company's IT systems to a safe failover site. Coleman required a secure connection for this failover as live data would be continuously replicated between the two sites in real time, while the other remote offices would need access to this information in a reliable manner.

Based on the ability to significantly increase network resiliency and remote manageability, Coleman decided to implement NetDevices' SG-8 services gateways versus the legacy routers and next generation firewalls that CMF had been using.

The SG-8 units are responsible for all data network connectivity and security, providing routing, firewall and VPN functionality, and thereby ensuring that all the information on the financial databases is continually updated to the disaster recovery site.

Coleman said, "When underwriting loans and providing insurance, CMF must be able to evaluate every case on its merits. To support this, our IT systems have to deliver information to our staff quickly and any outage would have a serious impact on our ability to provide good customer service. Disaster recovery is a service that we hope we never have to use, but if and when we do have to move over to the back-up site, it has to be simple and flawless."

The management of the overall solution was also of prime importance and NetDevices remote management capabilities allow Coleman to have complete control of the infrastructure without being physically present at the system itself. "Being able to ensure we can manage and resolve issues remotely, even during a software failure, was a critical requirement for CMF," Coleman added. "NetDevices is simple to run and easy to maintain. For a busy IT manager, that's exactly what you want."

The Future

CMF also supports a network of other remote offices and two other companies within the Close Brothers Group - a total of 20 sites being connected into the Doncaster office using a virtual private network (VPN) to access the information stored on CMF databases.

"Being able to ensure that all of our financial information is always available to staff will make them more efficient and give the best service to our network of dealers," said Coleman. "We are also looking at how the other features of NetDevices gateways can be used to give us further reliability and security in our network."