NEOS NETWORKS

CASE STUDY

Bakkavor

SD-WAN technology improves Bakkavor's
resilience and continues its digital transformation

Introduction

Bakkavor is the UK's leading supplier of fresh prepared food (FPF) and employs more than 19,000 people globally. With over 22 UK food manufacturing facilities spread across the nation, and a further 14 across the US and China, the retail giant provides services from ready meals to desserts and pizzas. And while the lockdown year of 2020 caused many businesses to pause transformation projects, for Bakkavor the increased demand for fresh prepared food led to an acceleration of its digital plans.

About Bakkavor

Bakkavor is the leading provider of fresh prepared food ("FPF") in the UK, with a growing international presence in the US and China. The Group is the number one by market share in the UK in the four FPF product categories of meals, salads, desserts, and pizza & bread, providing high-quality, fresh, healthy, and convenient food. Its customers include some of the UK's leading grocery retailers, including Tesco, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, and Waitrose. The Group's International segment operates in the US and China.

Bakkavor was founded in 1986 and has its headquarters in London. The Group has more than 19,000 employees and operates 23 factories in the UK, 5 in the US and 9 in China.

The challenge

With multiple sites to serve, and a network that was probably past its sell-by date, Bakkavor's plan to embrace digital transformation and move its software and data centre requirements to the cloud demanded not just a network overhaul, but a thorough review of what the market could offer and what would represent best global practice.

When looking for a connectivity partner to help support these ambitions, it was important the provider they chose was mindful not only of Bakkavor's IT challenges but also of keeping its 24/7 manufacturing centres operating at full capacity.

Moving its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, and other business solutions, to the cloud to enable more centralised control and uniform service, demands the best in network speed, resilience, and latency.

In fact, given Bakkavor's status as part of the UK's critical national infrastructure, it could only consider moving vital business resources and systems to the cloud if uptime could be guaranteed, downtime could be virtually eliminated, and overall business efficiency improved even further.

The outcome

Working with Bakkavor's team, Neos Networks outlined the benefits of designing a new Software Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) that could use and integrate the very best connectivity at each location. SD-WAN creates a network overlay that can combine different traditional WAN and broadband connections to deliver a seamless view of the network regardless of the type of transport technology used.

SD-WAN also allows organisations to make real-time changes to bandwidth and instantly switch to different back-up technologies in the event of a point of failure. True resilience in the network is not only gained from a separate cable in an alternative duct, but also by having a separate system operating under the same SD-WAN control. This gives resilience at both a network level and a software control level and allows locations to be served by any transport mechanism be that fibre, high-speed radio connectivity, or both.

Adopting SD-WAN from Neos Networks allowed Bakkavor to connect all of its manufacturing centres and offices to a central network in the cloud and continue the digital transformation of its business operations. Since implementation, the company has benefited from greater visibility of its enterprise-wide operations, real-time network insights, better diagnostic data and traffic management, as well as noticeably smoother resilience with instant network back-up.

Such has been the success of the initial UK project, that Neos Networks has been involved in extending the coverage of the SD-WAN network technology to cover Bakkavor's production facilities and services in the USA.

"As a Critical National Infrastructure provider, ensuring our production facilities and multiple sites have a reliable, resilient network to operate is essential. The power of SD-WAN technology delivers independence to our sites, with improved network visibility and resilience, ensuring maximum up-time for our essential production facilities."

Richard Barton, Network and Datacentre Domain Lead, Bakkavor