



Verizon and Ikea share Highlight monitoring & reporting for a clear and simple view of performance based SLA's over multiple paths

Having a fast and efficient network is critical for Ikea. The company's primary challenge is to ensure the performance of its core in-store processes and vital applications such as those for designing kitchen layouts. A poor performing network must not impact the Ikea brand.

Thomas Arnoldsson, Verizon's Service Programme Manager, is responsible for ensuring Verizon delivers the best possible solutions to Ikea whilst meeting contractual agreements. He explains, *"We are always looking at how Verizon can do more for Ikea. If it is more complex or more expensive, then Ikea won't like it. We always need to deliver something that is really valuable."*

With this in mind, Verizon is in the process of building a new intelligent, software defined wide area network (SD WAN). Already fifty per cent complete, the new hybrid network is being delivered across 150 Ikea stores in Sweden, France, the USA, Australia and Eastern Europe.

To support this new initiative, Verizon has extended its use of the Highlight monitoring and reporting service so that the teams at both Verizon and Ikea can share full visibility of network and application performance.

Solution

Thomas continues, *"We're replacing Ikea's old dual network where one line was active and the other passive, with one where the combined circuits are both active, supported by a range of settings to direct traffic in the best possible way."*

Five traffic categories have been set up, each with its own level of priority and specific path over the network. Voice traffic and critical applications have the highest priority and are directed over the fastest MPLS lines. Customer internet and co-worker traffic are sent into a security hub before going out to the internet and non-critical internet-offload traffic is passed over the low cost internet via the virtual private network (VPN).



Thomas adds, “Ikea has always had various classes of services but having different applications with a unique class and priority on the network is the first step to this intelligent hybrid, software defined WAN. Previously, we used Highlight to monitor the main bearer circuits but with this new format, the team has expanded Highlight to proactively test the round trips, delay and jitter for this new class of service traffic. With Highlight, Verizon and Ikea have shared visibility of where traffic is routed and under what circumstance.”

As part of its governance structure, Verizon holds monthly and quarterly meetings with Ikea’s technical, design and performance teams as well as senior managers. The reports generated by Highlight provide a fast and effective way for Verizon to show the performance and success of the new network arrangements.

Highlight in use

“During the implementation phase, Highlight has been invaluable,” confirms Thomas. “Our engineers use it to ensure traffic is given the right identification, the right priority and is carried in the right way. It really helps them to manage any changes quickly and easily.”

Highlight is also used across the Verizon’s technical programs, service management and lifecycle teams, who need to be confident that they are delivering what Ikea expects. They see exactly what Ikea sees and can ensure any issues are dealt with quickly.

Ikea also uses Highlight to keep a watchful eye over everything. Thomas says, “Ikea’s team infrastructure manager is particularly keen on Highlight. He uses it to get a quick view of network quality at any given time and to see if there are any health issues. Country managers can also access Highlight to see how their region is performing.”

Results

Thomas concludes, “The migration to this new network presents lots of opportunities and supports Ikea’s aggressive growth plans. There is no wastage since all network connections are being utilised intelligently and if anything fails, traffic is diverted over an alternative path.

“Through Highlight, we can show Ikea that what we are delivering is successful and in accordance to our agreement, helping to cement our relationship. On a day to day basis, we can both see exactly what is happening. By sharing the information, it becomes a transparent relationship where everything becomes obvious; it removes any distrust.

“It is Highlight’s ease of visibility that Ikea has found to be superior to the more technical-looking alternatives. This ease of use and the quick interpretation of information are what Ikea values, making it highly relevant and meaningful and a great asset as we continue to expand our relationship with them.”

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