Highlight helps retailer to improve efficiency of SD-WAN support and reduce cellular costs

The Highlight Service Assurance Platform is helping a retailer with 500 regional branches, offering a solution the enables the business to take full advantage of its recent Meraki SD-WAN installation.

Highlight's unified reporting and customisable alerting is giving the retailer the opportunity to enhance its support capability and minimise the use of expensive cellular networks.

The dream of self-managed SD-WAN for business

The retailer has installed Meraki SD-WAN across its entire estate of around 500 stores with two devices at each location. Each store utilises a primary broadband connection with a cellular backup connection available to ensure continued connectivity if the primary connection is unavailable.

With no IT specialist onsite at each branch, the Meraki SD-WAN set-up enables the company to support the system via its centralised IT team. It also enables fast deployment capabilities when stores open in a new location and fast, secure centralised deployment of routing and security policies. The Meraki SD-WAN solution being employed by this retailer was instrumental in keeping their stores running smoothly with the limited resources available to their central IT team.

Challenges to SD-WAN self-management

Despite the increased efficiency enabled by the adoption of Meraki SD-WAN, our retail customer still faced significant challenges managing such a large estate with such a small, centralised IT management team.

Due to the lack of branch-level IT support, the central IT team needed a way to prioritise and contextualise the wealth of SD-WAN performance metrics made available to them by the Meraki management portal.

Highlight and Meraki SD-WAN for business

- **Multi-site:** We help enterprises manage SD-WAN at scale with categorised services and locations.
- **Multi-tenant:** Flexible and easy to configure role and entity based access control for unlimited users.
- **Multi-vendor:** Complete Cisco and Meraki SD-WAN in a single view alongside all supporting connections.

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If, for example, the primary connection had failed at several sites and it switched over to the cellular backup, the team then had to go through a manual process to find the locations, another search to determine how long each outlet has been running on cellular and then another search to determine if it was an error with the SD-WAN setup or an unseen wider network issue before working with their service provider to investigate and solve the problem.

The IT team also needed to retain a historical record of the issues for analysis. This presented a heavy manual burden to capture the details from one day to the next, particularly with a small number of workers on a rotating shift pattern.

Solving retail network management challenges using Highlight

The retailer's central IT department can now use the Highlight Service Assurance Platform to provide real-time and historical network service visibility across their whole network estate, beyond just the SD-WAN.

As a validated and supported app on the Meraki Marketplace, our platform utilises Meraki's comprehensive APIs, where we extract their data and provide the IT manager with an enhanced estate management and reporting interface to present standardised performance metrics. This enables users to easily identify and quickly solve any issues.

Of particular interest to our customer was Highlight's Grid View, which enables the IT management team to group all the technologies into layers of connectivity, showing performance of both the SD-WAN connections and the underlying services that support it. This makes it simple and quick to identify any areas with problems. For example, they can spot if a fixed line connection is live or down, how long that connection has had an issue, such as an hour, a day or more. Most importantly, they can now identify if a branch is running on cellular, as well as check if the primary broadband connection is ready and available to be restored.

Meraki and Highlight for centralised SD-WAN support

In the past, the company's technical support had become labour intensive, forcing them to become reactive. With Highlight, this retailer's IT team can see a clear picture of how all connections are performing, with detailed unified reports on the availability and performance of devices, SD-WAN tunnels and all supporting connectivity.

Highlight also increased alert relevancy by enabling the users to set alerts for specific conditions, set active times and alter the sensitivity of the alerting system on a per-connection basis. This customisability helps to filter out the noise of false positives, meaning that if they receive an alert in their inbox, they know to pay attention and be proactive in making the fix.

Highlight also enables tighter control over the company's multiple external providers. It enables the IT manager to identify which ones are having issues and provide evidence when asking for improvements or reporting problems.