



Cisco high-touch network optimisation service takes off at Telstra

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– Clint Brunero, Team Manager, Telstra

Telstra is Australia's largest telecommunications and information services company, and supports some of the country's most complex businesses. Since 1997, it has managed a major Australian airline's communications requirements and enabled the airline to provide a seamless, high-quality service to its customers.

Telstra delivers voice and data services and manages connections between the airline's head office, airports, maintenance sites, campuses, data centres and partners such as travel agents. A dedicated team of 19 people within Telstra manages implementations and incident resolution for the airline's high-speed voice and data networks.

Critical issue

Due to the inherent risks and critical processes involved in operating an airline, Telstra's customer needs a robust, reliable network targeting 100 percent uptime, and expert support available 24 hours a day.

The airline demands faultless performance and reliability, so it can operate smoothly and safely, compete effectively and respond quickly to external events such as natural disasters.

“Our client runs a large, complex enterprise system across sophisticated data networks, and treats all areas of its business as highly critical,” says Clint Brunero, Team Manager of the dedicated care team at Telstra.

“Even a brief network outage or minor reduction in performance can be very costly, and if it isn't resolved quickly, the consequences may be disastrous. Network problems can impact the online booking system, passenger security and safety, check-in processes, baggage handling or flight schedules. The airline is then left to deal with a lot of disgruntled passengers.

“It's our responsibility to ensure the airline's networks are up and running at all times, and proactively manage and minimise risk. There's no room for error.”

What Telstra required

By 2008, Telstra had been working with Cisco for several years to provide advanced business capabilities to the airline. Cisco's Network Optimisation Service helped Telstra strengthen and stabilise the airline's networks. However, Telstra wanted to build on this relationship with a higher-level service to better protect the airline's essential operations. In particular, it needed personalised technical attention and support to provide faster incident resolution.

“When our customer has network issues, it needs a high-priority, personalised response from expert engineers who understand its business and network infrastructure,” Brunero says.

“Our whole team really values being able to call someone who has an intimate knowledge of the network like we do and can immediately start finding the source of a fault.”

Clint Brunero, Team Manager, Telstra

What Cisco implemented

Telstra employed Cisco's High-Touch Operations Management Service. This premium operational and technical support service delivers comprehensive management of network issues and priority access to Cisco support resources.

A dedicated Cisco operations manager monitors Telstra's technical support needs, tracks service requests and resolves process issues quickly and effectively.

“We provide Telstra with personalised, high-touch access to our network and operations specialists,” says Darrian Fuss, Service and Support Manager for Cisco. “Our dedicated operations manager focuses on resolving network issues for Telstra and identifying measures to help prevent them from recurring.”

According to Brunero, Cisco's High-Touch Operations Management Service builds on the Network Optimisation Service that Cisco was previously providing.

“Having the High-Touch Operations Management Service on top of the Network Optimisation Service gives us an extremely high level of service and complete confidence,” says Brunero.

As part of this service, Cisco also provides:

- Personalised operational support during business hours
- Ongoing service request and escalation management
- Periodic conference calls to report on and expedite issue resolution
- Weekly, monthly and quarterly reports on the status of Telstra's service requests
- Documentation of Telstra's specific operational and related activities to help with planning.

“Cisco's High-Touch Operations Management Service gives us the support we need to provide the service our client needs,” says Brunero.

The outcome for Telstra and its client

1. Faster problem resolution

Cisco's High-Touch Operations Management Service helps Telstra support its customer when something unusual happens, so it can respond quickly to avoid or minimise impact on passengers. According to Brunero, Telstra has reduced problem resolution time through faster troubleshooting by Cisco's network engineers and more efficient implementation of new projects.

For example, in late 2010 the airline implemented a new wireless check-in system in several capital city airports, which allowed baggage handlers to scan luggage using handheld wireless devices.

“Several of the handsets were dropping out and we didn't know why,” explains Brunero. “Our Cisco operations manager worked with wireless experts and development engineers to identify the issue. Initial testing showed there was no problem. But Cisco persisted: they took a new approach that involved monitoring the baggage handlers as they used the wireless devices. Cisco then identified the issue and developed a solution.”

“That's the value of this service. We persevere together until the issue is resolved, in line with the expectations Telstra sets for itself for customer service. We can completely rely on our high-touch operations manager because he understands our requirements and is familiar with the network. For us, it means confidence.”



2. Increased staff productivity

According to Brunero, the High-Touch Operations Management Service also saves time for IT staff at Telstra and has helped boost productivity.

"The service is very valuable to us, day to day. Rather than chasing different people at Cisco, we have one point of contact and a common understanding of the network environment. This has led to significant time savings for our team.

"Our whole team really values being able to call someone who has an intimate knowledge of the network like we do, and can immediately start finding the source of a fault."

3.Reduced risks and improved network stability

Thanks to Telstra, the airline can focus on delivering the best possible service to passengers while enjoying almost 100 percent network uptime.

"Recent improvements in the performance of the airline's network are partly attributable to the High-Touch Operations Management Service," says Brunero. "It allows our client to get on with the business of operating a reliable, safe and successful airline, without worrying about IT or communications issues that might prevent it from running its business.

"It helps Telstra deliver maximum network availability, and a superbly run network, which means we can provide our customers with an exceptionally high-quality service."

4. Greater availability of airline services

According to Brunero, Telstra can now also provide a more responsive service to the airline.

"We have improved the way we integrate new technologies into the airline's core infrastructure, and can respond more quickly and efficiently to problems – whether they are within the airline's networks or external," he says.

"For example, during the 2011 Chilean volcanic ash clouds and Queensland floods, the airline's online booking service was under increased pressure as passengers booked, changed and cancelled flights. We helped the airline manage the spike in booking activity and keep its services available throughout these incidents."

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