

Faster ERP access with Colt VPN

Customer name

Facq

Business

Wholesale business in sanitary facilities, central heating and systems for water treatment

Size

Midsized

Challenge

Providing a reliable VPN to assure access to actual data

Services used

- Colt VPN

Colt offers high speed and availability VPN to Facq at the lowest price

Facq is a Belgian wholesaler of bathroom fittings, central heating and water treatment systems. Facq's customers are a mixture of professional plumbers and installers and DIY enthusiasts.

At the heart of the business is an IBS enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, which is responsible for the commercial management of the company. It contains information about quotations and orders and keeps track of the availability of 10,000 different stock items. A separate accounts package is linked to the ERP system.

Facq uses a VPN to connect its 320 staff at its 15 sales outlets and six showrooms with the ERP system.

'The staff in the sales outlets must always be able to answer customers' questions immediately,' says André Pauwels, IT manager at Facq. 'They must have an instant view of the deliverability of the products, they must be able to look at the status of an order, they must be able to create orders, and so forth.'

To ensure a fast and reliable connection between its stores and ERP system, Facq chose Colt.

Faster response times

Colt provides Facq with a 2Mbps leased line to connect its central IBM® iSeries™ 520 machine with the 15 sales outlets. 'The Colt VPN solution provides us with the fast response times that we had in mind,' says André Pauwels. 'The sales outlets benefit from fast response times and greater availability of information.'

In the event that the VPN infrastructure is unavailable for any reason, Facq has an ISDN line as a backup to ensure that sales outlets can always connect to the ERP system. Colt's service level agreement (SLA) also guarantees that the VPN will be operational again within four hours.

At present, the large showroom in Zaventem is the busiest point in the network, with around 30 terminals. Alongside the terminals for the sales staff, there are also around 20 laser scanners for customer use. Among other things, customers can scan in their orders themselves.





// **Colt has helped to strengthen our competitiveness by delivering better performance. At the same time, we have made a substantial saving. //**

André Pauwels, IT Manager, Facq

Synchronising with the website

The Facq e-commerce site plays an important role in the extended network configuration. 'Through the e-commerce site, installers can place orders day and night, enquire about the availability of products, and so on,' says André Pauwels. 'Obviously we have to ensure that the customers can perform their searches on the basis of up-to-date information. For this reason, six times a day a synchronisation takes place between the central iSeries-machine and the server for the e-commerce site.'

Facq is also placing the 2Mbps line for staff internet traffic with Colt. 'We will make use of the opportunity to upgrade the line and thereby offer the users a faster speed,' says André Pauwels. 'Via this line all our staff must have a fast internet connection, for such applications as email and the use of our own e-commerce site.'

Colt leads the market

Facq was using VPN infrastructure from Belgacom when it decided to survey the market to see if a better service was available.

'We brought in the Toledo consultancy to draw up specifications and investigate the VPN solutions of all suppliers,' explains André Pauwels. 'Through this we wanted to work out what the best VPN solution would be for us. Colt emerged from the study as the best.'

The functionality and performance offered by Colt are of a higher level, while the cost price is considerably lower. In addition, Facq was able to choose Colt with confidence, having used Colt for telephony since 1999.

A smooth migration

The switching of the VPN from Belgacom to Colt was completed within a day, as promised. 'This really was a task that could not be underestimated,' André Pauwels says, 'Which, among other things, included reprogramming the routers. The migration was carried out very quickly and the whole thing was operational the following day, as predicted.'

At the same time, the changeover provided the company with additional transparency. Previously, Facq had to work with different suppliers for voice and data. Now Colt handles everything, which also simplifies the administration.

'And because the bandwidth remained the same at the time of the migration, Facq can easily compare Belgacom with Colt.' From this comparison, it seems 'Colt has helped to strengthen our competitiveness by delivering better performance. At the same time we have made a substantial saving,' says André Pauwels.

Future plans

'The 2Mbps capacity is ample at the moment,' says André Pauwels. 'In time, we might move up to 4Mbps, and definitely if the number of sales outlets continues to grow quickly.'

Facq is also planning to investigate the opportunities presented by Voice over IP (VoIP).

Contact Colt:

Call: +32 2 790 16 16

Email: be.info@colt.net