

CCS Media - Agile IT

CCS Media Agile IT - Flexible working to better enable our 500 people through technology

When CCS started to consider the strategy around our agile program it was done with people at the core. It was our management objective to ensure we used technology as an enabler to allow our employees to be successful and deliver without the boundaries of some traditional IT models.

As technology continues to develop, users expect the same experiences when consuming applications irrespective of if that is at home or in business.

So our goal was to provide an environment which was scalable to hundreds of devices without compromising deployment speed or the user experience. This covered everything from telephony, devices, edge connectivity, WiFi access within the CCS offices, applications and security.

The How

Working with our Pre Sales Architects we started to define the key objectives to our project. Creating a clear outline allowed them to work with the technology vendors and provide us with workshops involving the subject matter experts from the various providers. This was invaluable and allowed us to make informed choices understanding where the technologies were evolving.

Security and compliance was always running through all the aspects of the project as we were also working towards ISO27001. Creating a solution that had data integrity and confidentiality built into the design was of huge significance to not only meet the scope of our certification but also to demonstrate to our employees and customers that we take our obligations for data seriously.



The Edge

We spent a lot of time reviewing the networking area as this was a key component to what we were looking to achieve. Fortinet gave us a scalable edge technology that was high on the innovation quadrant in all of the independent studies. Using their compliance checker at point of device connection allowed us to add a layer of policy control. This meant no devices could connect that was below our base line, patched up to date, AV endpoint at expect level etc. Additionally we also implemented FortiToken which gives users a 2-factor security model driven by a pin code that updates every 60 seconds.

Using one of our network security partners, we also added a management layer to the edge environment to further enhance our internal capabilities. The CCS environment is resilient and has a failover process should the Fortinet devices fail. However, adding management allows us to provide vulnerability management, patch/upgrade support as well as technical skills over and above our own internal team.

This was important to me as security is an area that changes daily, hourly in some cases, so you need to be sure you have suitable skills to monitor these areas.

Using burst capabilities and contracts, with SLAs, around management and support allowed us to provide a solution to our business that is robust and scalable.

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The Experience

The user experience had to be quick and have access anywhere, while the technology had to add value and not limit what our employees could do. The office was no longer a location.

Working with our strategic partner HP we introduced HP Elitebooks running Win10. This allowed us to run the O365 suite as well as taking advantage of the many platform advantages. Users can connect to mail and use the core office environment wherever they are in the UK and are still subject to our security controls. We also added MS Teams so that they could collaborate with others both inside the organisation and with our customers. Adding O365 was a big change for us as this allowed us to add significant efficiencies to the way we deploy, as it's monthly subscription, but also to how users work.

Removing the need to travel helped us reduce our carbon footprint, bringing teams together quickly to make decisions were all real game changes. CCS now runs a lot of its management meetings over teams including our Board Meetings.

All of our meeting rooms are Teams enabled, making it easy to collaborate either in a group or as individuals. Through 2020 we will continue to evolve this use and will start to deliver staff appraisals/development sessions and brand/technology training over teams. This helps users become more efficient and part of our digital transformation.

Employees don't need to spend hours in cars travelling, this can be frustrating and adds cost to our businesses.

Think about all the hours alone driving, just moving to Teams reduces this overhead cost and allows people to be more productive.

How to manage an environment of this scale with over 500 devices was something we were mindful of. We needed to give agility on management and deployment as well as retain security. Scale couldn't come with excessive support overhead or complexity.

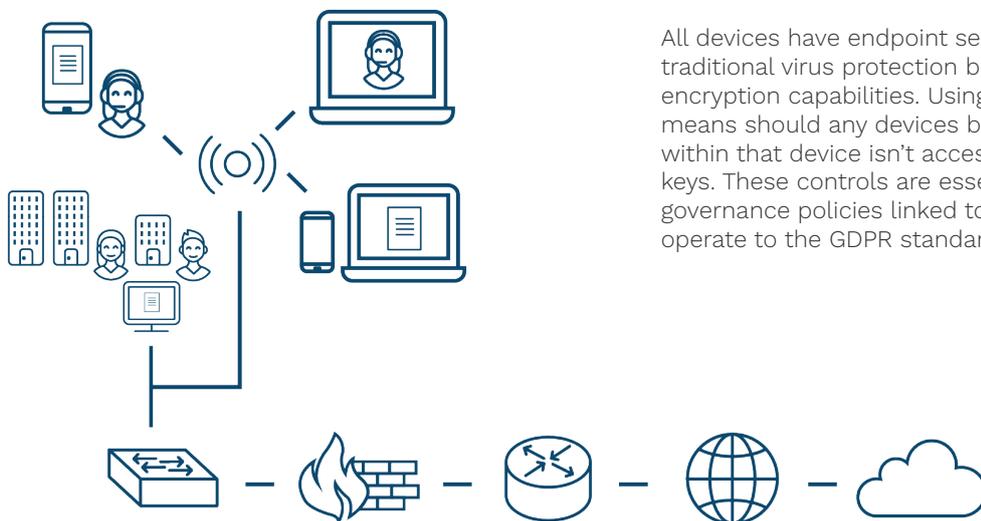
The initial rollout was quite challenging as we had to image, deploy, personalise and asset log each device. Additionally when we moved all 500 users to the new platform there was support and training to consider as well. Our project also included migration to a SIP telephone platform to give our users softphone access to the device. This was essential to allow users to retain extension mobility when working either in the office or remotely. This also allowed us to retain that agile deployment model as this was again a cloud enabled product.

After the pilot location, it was clear the pressure this would put on the internal team to deliver, whilst also supporting the legacy environment. We got around this by using our internal configuration team to image all devices from our gold image.

Once this was done they would ship to site, based on our deployment schedule. Benefits here were reduced IT involvement but critically they could set up the peripheral items (docking station, external keyboard and mice etc) and remove all packaging. This isn't something you necessarily think of but the amount of waste to dispose of here is significant. Using these resources allowed IT to focus on set up, support and training.

Using the Panda management console then allows the IT team to centrally manage from a single pane of glass on all devices. This gave them remote access management, silent rollout of new applications either to users or groups of users. Allows us to ensure updates are controlled and manages policies to prevent unauthorised applications been deployed.

All devices have endpoint security in place that provide traditional virus protection but also give DLP and encryption capabilities. Using Deslock and safeitica means should any devices be lost or stolen the data within that device isn't accessible without the encryption keys. These controls are essential to comply with our data governance policies linked to ISO27001 but also key to operate to the GDPR standard.



Enterprise

Considering how we scale out quickly and efficiently at the data centre was perhaps the easiest decision in this whole process. Looking at HP server technologies linked to nimble storage gave us machine based learning technology using Infosight. This really gives my IT team great data and puts them on the front foot.

The infosight analytics help them manage our VM workloads and predict issues before they occur. Plus having access to data from all of the other install base around the globe also means we can use this data to improve our environment or use as a benchmark when considering other projects.

ROI

The objectives for CCS was to create a scalable platform that offered no boundaries to how employees work. I think we have more than achieved this goal.

We wanted to make employees more successful and productive within their roles. Again looking at our BI we can see the majority of users have grown and in fact they do more. Employees now tend to work longer as it's in there interest to do so.

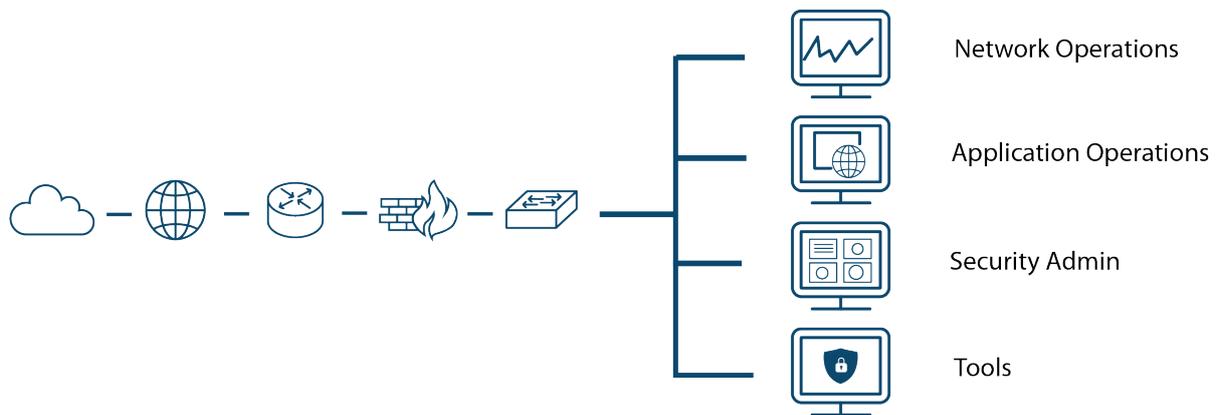
Users have reduced stress/improved mental health because they no longer need to do long journeys to the office and have more quality time with family/friends. We have also seen a massive reduction in illness following the introduction of this program.

In terms of a business objective we had to deliver the project without impact to our business and like all projects it had to come in on time and to budget. Using Project Management from our Pre Sales team was essential to this process. Having somebody dedicated internally to managing the process and keeping all external and internal parties to time was fantastic. This allowed my team to work on the technologies without wasting time chasing others for updates and doing administrative tasks. Change projects are complicated so controls need to be managed efficiently and documented.

Our services are all Prince II accredited.

CCS has invested a large amount of effort to enable our staff, we use the technology we sell and we understand what is needed to turn product into solutions.

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