

Aramex Scales Up Branch Office Performance and Connectivity with SD-WAN

Leading global transportation and logistics firm dramatically reduces WAN costs and improves SaaS application performance by leveraging broadband connectivity



With over 13,900 employees working across 354 distinct locations spanning 60 countries, leading logistics and transportation specialist Aramex is a truly geographically distributed organisation. Unsurprisingly, considering the high volumes of data being transferred and shared across its network, and the growing need for increased agility, virtualisation features heavily on the company's agenda.

"We started the transition to a virtualised environment about five years ago," remembers Ramzy Masarweh, the corporate IT manager at Aramex. In his capacity at the organisation, Masarweh is charged with managing its key data centres, which are distributed across Jordan, the UK, South Africa, the UAE and India, with a new one planned in Singapore.

Back then, Aramex was facing issues with data replication between its main data centres, which host the organisation's key applications, including shipment tracking, billing and productivity applications, such as Exchange, SharePoint, Lync and SQL. Dell has been Aramex's preferred partner for almost 15 years now, and at the time Aramex had just implemented Dell EqualLogic to facilitate off-site replication.

"Dell turned us on to Silver Peak, which provided us with a replication acceleration solution that scaled up our off-site replication throughput by 50x. By implementing a virtualised environment, we were able to amplify performance. We wanted the same for our smaller, remote offices, but back then it just wasn't cost effective to do so – the size of the offices simply did not justify the cost," notes Masarweh.

And so it continued up until recently, when Silver Peak opened the doors to software-defined wide area networks (SD-WAN), a technology paradigm for wide area networking that delivers easy-to-deploy, inexpensive broadband connectivity to branch offices, while ensuring data and applications are secure and perform to user expectations.

Aware of Aramex's needs, Silver Peak introduced it to its new Unity EdgeConnect solution that enables distributed enterprises to dramatically reduce the cost and complexity of building a WAN by leveraging broadband to connect users to applications. Following a successful proof-of-concept, Aramex placed an order for 20 units.

Branch office connectivity

Over the last few years, Aramex's geographic and business footprint has been steadily expanding. But each new site came stitched on with a familiar line-up of issues: a lengthy network installation and configuration process coupled with a tedious mapping out of which routes would be best for the new office, both of which necessitated a local presence.

"With its zero-touch deployment model and its dynamic path control feature, the Silver Peak solution automates these manual and time consuming issues while delivering increased control. Additionally, in our experience with it over the last few months, Unity EdgeConnect can be fully deployed in a new location in less than 15 minutes," explains Masarweh.

Customer: Aramex

aramex
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Business Challenges

- MPLS networks too expensive for smaller, remote offices
- Complex network installation and configuration for new remote sites
- Sluggish enterprise and SaaS applications, such as SharePoint

Network Background

- Five key data centres distributed across Jordan, the UK, South Africa, the UAE and India
- 354 offices overall, spanning 60 countries
- Over 13,900 employees worldwide

Silver Peak Results

- Zero-touch deployment enabled efficient remote-office connectivity
- Dynamic path control improved application performance
- Reduced application response time boosted employee productivity
- Flexibility to graduate to a virtualised environment

The zero-touch nature of the Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN solution injects the flexibility that Aramex needs to continue to expand into new, uncharted areas. The dynamic path control (DPC) feature, meanwhile, allows for improved performance by steering real-time traffic over any broadband or multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) link based on company-defined business intent policies.

“With our Beirut office, for example, we were experiencing a round trip time of 300ms for certain applications which Unity EdgeConnect has brought down to 140ms. So with SharePoint, for instance, we’re seeing a much faster response time when using the application to download, open and upload documents – we’re down from two minutes to less than a minute, which has gone a long way in boosting productivity,” says Masarweh.

With its sights set on further virtualisation, the company is now increasingly looking to incorporate Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications such as Office 365 into its IT infrastructure.

The Silver Peak advantage

The explosion of cloud services and mounting frustration surrounding the high cost and inflexibility of MPLS networks has forced a rethink of the enterprise WAN. Companies are now looking to the Internet to augment or replace their current WAN connections, which allows for faster WAN provisioning and the ability to use multiple WAN paths at the same time while ensuring the security and performance of business-critical applications.

With the Silver Peak SD-WAN virtual overlay, Aramex has reshaped how it connects applications to users across its geographically distributed enterprise. Aramex can now also rapidly and non-disruptively augment or replace its MPLS networks with any form of broadband connectivity, realising significant cost savings without compromising performance. Currently, Aramex has graduated to a hybrid network, with plans for a fully broadband environment.

Meanwhile, in addition to scaled up performance levels and lowered connectivity costs, Silver Peak administrators also benefit from unprecedented levels of visibility into both legacy and cloud applications, and gain the unique ability to centrally assign business intent policies to secure and control all WAN traffic, through Unity EdgeConnect’s management platform: Unity Orchestrator.

“The high cost and limited capacity of WAN connectivity at our remote sites was becoming restrictive to our business. Silver Peak has delivered reliable performance and automation at remote sites, freeing us up to open the doors to more locations now and in the future,” concludes Masarweh.

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