



Network upgrade puts mattress manufacturer's latency issues to bed

Customer Profile: Shelton, Connecticut- based Latex International is a global mattress and pillow manufacturer. The company produces mattress cores, toppers, and pillow buns using both the Talalay molding process and the Dunlop continuous flow process. It has manufacturing facilities in Shelton, Connecticut, and Wichita Falls, Texas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
LATEX INTERNATIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing company • HQ in Shelton, Connecticut USA • More than 200 employees around the world
BUSINESS CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated network infrastructure causing latency issues in manufacturing processes • Machinery shut-downs cost \$10,000 per hour on average • Logical security Issues
NETWORK SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced existing switches with Cisco Catalyst 4500 switches • Switched out cabling • Properly configured network switches to support logical security
BUSINESS RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restored 99.999% uptime for production • Saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost production time • Resolved latency issues • Resolved logical security issues

Situation

Latex International, formerly Latex Foam Products, was founded more than three decades ago. Since its inception, the company has grown steadily, first to a 15,000 square foot facility, then, into a 205,000 square foot facility in 2002. Today, Latex International operates three facilities and is the world's largest Talalay latex mattress and pillow producer.

As a leading manufacturer, Latex International has integrated new, robotic technologies into their manufacturing facilities. In doing so, however, they found that the company's aging network infrastructure needed to be upgraded in order deliver the results that would allow them to maintain their production schedule and meet global demand.

"We were encountering a lot of latency issues. When the network couldn't keep up with the traffic, it would shut down our production line and create a sizeable problem for our business," said Steve Watson, VP of Finance at Latex International. "For every hour the plant was down, the company lost \$10,000 on average."

At the heart of their network infrastructure issues was their core switches. They were at the end of their lifecycle, with no support options available. The poor switch performance had a negative effect on the robots used to operate the pouring and molding process to manufacture its products. Any glitch in the system would affect the robotics and production time, creating quality-control issues for the end product. The company knew it needed to invest in its network and wanted to make sure they got it right

Solution

When Latex International decided to invest in upgrading their network infrastructure, they turned to their longtime partner Ash Creek Enterprises, Inc., a CISCO Premier Partner with deep experience working with advanced CISCO networking technologies. After Ash Creek and Latex International's IT people discussed the network's issues with latency, timeouts, retries, and the logical security between their networks, they recommended the installation of CISCO Catalyst 4500 switches. Due to Latex International's production schedule, the network infrastructure upgrade had to be done in several stages. To accommodate the client's needs, Ash Creek was able to perform the upgrade during the facilities scheduled down time for maintenance.

Business Results

Ash Creek was able to replace the cabling and install the switches with almost zero down time. The new switches resolved Latex International's latency issues and allowed the company to manage their network security more effectively. "Prior to installation, the network had an average latency of between 2-4 milliseconds. After installation, network latency was below one millisecond on average. This was a huge success for our company," Watson continued. "Since our operation runs on

a continual basis, any stoppage in production has a significant impact on our business. We are now able to achieve 99.999 percent uptime, which has saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost production time at the minimum. .”

The drive to reduce downtime also introduced a disaster recovery element into the project. Previously, if there was a problem at the main facility in Connecticut, the entire worldwide operation could be shut down. Now, if the primary system goes down in Shelton, Connecticut another comes online immediately.

“When you look at our past utilization and output for the last 6 months, we are doing well compared to the past four or five years, which is huge,” said Watson. “We typically run with only three to five days’ leadtime on orders. In a 24 x7 environment it’s really tough to make up for lost time. Having a disaster recovery system in place means we’re able to meet our deadline and commitments without extraordinary efforts.”

On the security side, prior to installing the new switches, the company was never able to fully utilize its logical security between its network segments. After the installation and reconfiguration of the switches, the company was able to segment out their traffic to provide better security between their networks.

Watson likes the way Ash Creek continues to work with Latex International’s internal IT staff. Ash Creek has been overseeing the company’s high-level server issues for several years. Latex International credits their extensive expertise in Cisco technologies and networking with helping them achieve a high level of performance.

“Ash Creek has proved to be very knowledgeable about the issues we faced with our network and were very receptive to our questions and concerns, providing timely and useful responses. They not only answered our immediate need, but also helped us build a network that prepared us for future innovation.”

-Steven Watson, Vice President of Finance at Latex International

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