



McNairn Packaging Sourced a Robust and Simple Solution to the Issue of Online Security and Found it With Cloud Managed Networks, and Cisco Meraki

“Our philosophy has always been ‘put stuff in that will work’. We can rely to some degree on the vendor to help us out, but we want stuff that works in its own right.”

Customer Name: Larry Coe

Organization Name: McNairn Packaging

Industry: Packaging Manufacture

Location: 6 Elise Street, Westfield, MA 01085 and 125 Consumers Drive, Whitby, Ontario L1N1C4.

Challenges

- A relatively small in-house IT team with the need to focus on manufacturing requirements
- The high financial impact of any potential firewall downtime
- Legacy IT infrastructures which required updating to be prepared for the latest malware, spam, phishing etc.
- The inflexibility and slow reaction time of the larger telecommunications companies which McNairn had traditionally relied upon

Key Business Impacts

- The ease of use and in-depth reporting meant that the staff of McNairn were free to concentrate on their manufacturing tasks.
- Implementation has completely removed the risk of firewall downtime
- McNairn established a relationship with Cloud Managed Networks (CMN) which they feel is future proof and will grow and adapt as their business does.

Factors Which Clearly Influenced the Decision to Work with Cloud Managed Networks

- The fact that CMN listened to their concerns, drilled down into their problems and provided a set of solutions that were tailored specifically for McNairn.
- The solutions provided were simple and robust. McNairn wanted a system which would basically ‘run itself’, allowing the workforce to concentrate on the core business
- McNairn felt that the larger telecommunications companies were more focused on sales than customer service, and preferred the hands-on listening approach adopted by the team at CMN.

A Small IT Team Needing a Minimal Solution

IT Director Larry Coe explained that when they chose to partner with Cisco, McNairn had been around for a long time and had legacy technology systems which were aging and in need of replacement. One of the key difficulties they faced was that, as manufacturers, they didn’t have a large IT staff to monitor the systems they were using. The answer was a system which, in Larry’s words “Would pretty much take care of itself, while giving us the capability to monitor activity across our various manufacturing plants.”

In particular, they wanted an email security and firewall system capable of dealing with the issues of phishing, ransomware, and spam, while protecting their business email accounts from the risk of becoming compromised.

Choosing A Solution Which Came with Enough Support

“The involvement in the project from our end was delivered by two people. In the past, we’d worked with the larger telecommunications companies, due to the need for lines of communication between our various companies and the ability to communicate back and forth. Our first instinct was to continue working with these larger companies, but we came to realize that this would be a mistake.”

The larger companies offered conventional solutions using traditional hardware. The downside of what they were offering was the lack of on-going support for McNairn. The solutions being offered would have needed a member of the McNairn team working full time to monitor the systems being used – or a brand-new IT expert being taken on. When they talked to CMN, they found that for a similar budget, the support being offered was in an entirely different league.

‘What We Need to Have, Not What You Need to Sell’

Larry felt that the approach of the larger companies left something to be desired, namely the virtue of being good listeners. Unlike larger companies, who generally recommend the latest and most ‘exciting’ products, CMN listened to McNairn and provided them with exactly what was required. In addition to conventional hardware solutions, we also advised on best practice and made suggestions which added value to the company, taking on the role of strategic partners rather than just service providers for hire. CMN pride themselves on addressing the cores issues of a client, establishing exactly what the problems being faced are, and then providing precisely the right solutions. As Larry himself explained: “We’re saying ‘guys, this is not what we need, we need to be able to do just this’, and I think Cloud Managed Networks listened to all that, I think they were a good fit for us.”

The Initial Technology and the Immediate Impact

The starting point of the project was the installation of new firewalls. The first technologies recommended were the Cisco Meraki MX Firewalls. In addition to this were switches and access points, but the initial focus was on firewalls and internet security.

Larry explained how much of a major impact a failure in the firewall could have on McNairn’s business. The company is run off a centralized system, and if the lines of communication between plants go down, then the plant itself is out of operation. If that happens, the fact that a plant can’t label goods, for example, could mean 8

hours of work lost at a cost rising from 10 to 12 thousand dollars or even more when the price of the labor involved is factored in.

Choosing CMN

The main goal of McNairn's search for a new partner was to look for one that they could grow with, and they felt that the listening, service centered approach taken by CMN fit this requirement exactly. The other companies had offered similar Cisco Meraki equipment to CMN but bundled them as part of larger, more unwieldy packages. As Larry explains: "We met with CMN, told them what we needed, took a look at their facilities and thought they might be suitable for what needs to be done."

After the initial planning meetings, the process rolled out in a straightforward manner. With no testing environment, McNairn had to cut the system over on a Friday and spend the weekend evaluating it. The only issue was caused by the lines between factories. The set-up of these lines had to be altered to work with the Cisco Meraki equipment and enable the plants to communicate.

In order to make this happen, a member of the CMN team worked with McNairn and the telecommunications company involved late into Saturday night to ensure the correct changes to the network were made and the system was up and running.

"CMN is perfect for our needs because I can go and look at it when I want to, and I can understand it quickly. I can see what's going on and make a decision to move forward. I know it's working, and I can carry on with the rest of my day."

Larry felt that the larger telecom companies were focused on selling their latest product or were too slow and cumbersome when offering solutions. Too often, where McNairn would be willing to explore a solution, larger companies would insist on an evaluation and study lasting 6, 8 or 12 weeks, sometimes even longer. In the meantime, as Larry put it "I still need a solution, like, two weeks ago."



Simplicity and Robustness

Larry sums things up simply – 'Life is good as long as those firewalls are working'. As a manufacturing company, McNairn wants to be able to concentrate on making their products, safe in the knowledge that the systems which protect their business are in place and running. Since the project covered by this case study, McNairn hasn't experienced any downtime at all. The future-proof nature of the solution is also vital. Larry is keen to point out the fact that Cisco Meraki updates automatically once a week to stay abreast of the latest security threats, and that this means he can 'set it and forget it'.

"Our customers have come to expect high levels of communications or customer service. We have a very good

reputation and the services provided by Cisco Meraki and CMN help to uphold that.

I can go and look at it quickly, I can get a graph and I can see what my usage is. I can look at my security settings and see if we're getting hammered by attacks or what's happened over the last 90 days. I can also deal with problems quickly, and that's what I need."

A Recommended Solution

"If someone came to me for advice on the kind of services provided by CMN, I'd tell them that if they go with some of the traditional equipment they've got to realize that they'll probably need somebody either on site or kept on a retainer to configure it. With CMN, you know that with a little bit of knowledge you can take care of it yourself or work with them and they can support you. Some of the hardware offered elsewhere may seem cheaper at first glance, but the monthly support you'll need will be the equivalent of almost a full-time salary. I think that CMN has some great people. I think if you want somebody to listen and be there when you need them, they're responsive, and I would gladly recommend them."

The Cisco Email Security Solution at a Glance:

One of the major aspects of the delivery of the project was the issue of email security for McNairn.

How integral is email to your organization?

In business to business terms, it's still completely integral to the way we work. For that reason, we've always had security in place.

Have you been impacted by malware in the past?

In the past, it was probably companies such as banks or big public companies that were targeted, but I think that, in recent years, less 'traditional' targets have been at risk. The big change the new system has introduced is that we now have excellent reporting of how often we're being attacked. It allows us to see that we're exposed more than perhaps we thought, and we then take the necessary steps.

How was the implementation process?

The implementation process ran very smoothly indeed. It took maybe 3 or 4 hours to get everything up and running, and that included any training we needed.

What were the challenges?

I think the biggest challenge was determining exactly which product best fit our needs. There was a huge and varied range on offer, and once we'd gone through the options and, working with CMN, made our choice, the rest was plain sailing.