

Data#3 Customer Story

# Cisco ACI Solution Supports the Future of Business in Engineering Industry

Data#3



# Data#3



## Project Highlight

**The organisation's in-house IT team is now able to ensure connectivity for the business across more than 100 sites worldwide.**

## Objective

When an ageing network infrastructure approached end of life, an organisation in the engineering industry sought to replace it with a more intuitive and easily managed alternative. Not only did they want to reduce ongoing costs, they also wanted to deliver new capabilities to the business while reducing risk.

## Approach

The organisation wanted any IT investment to work hard, so they spent time analysing future business expectations. Once they were satisfied, they had a clear vision of what was needed, they initiated a competitive tender process. Data#3 was chosen because it had the right mix of technology and expertise and understood the way the business worked.

## Solutions & Services

- ✓ Data & Analytics Services
- ✓ Security Services
- ✓ Procurement & Project Services
- ✓ Cisco ACI Solution

## Benefits

- Boosted business continuity
- Greater reliability as single points of failure eliminated
- Reduced support and maintenance costs
- Agile, cloud-ready solution that grows with the business
- Increased productivity
- Applications run faster
- Reduced financial risk associated with downtime

## Testimonial

**“Undertaking a major network project can be daunting to any organisation, but it is important that you find the right partner who understands your business's attitude towards technology as well as its future plans.”**

**Kingsley McGarrigle, General Manager for WA, Data#3 Limited.**



## Cisco ACI Solution

**“The customer took the time to understand what COVID-19 meant to them as an organisation and how they could move forward.”**

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## The Background

As an organisation based in the engineering industry, managing many sites in diverse locations means that communication is key. As previous network infrastructure aged, and technology developments placed new demands on underlying infrastructure, frustrating outages often occurred. The organisation sought a solution that would greatly reduce this risk, while driving productivity and allowing for continued business growth.

## The Challenge

With sites spread across various locations, communication within the wider group was paramount. The network performs an important role in keeping staff connected with the business and its customers. Data#3 General Manager, Kingsley McGarrigle knew it was important to the customer's business, that as critical core infrastructure aged, any challenges that arose would be addressed quickly.

*“With existing equipment that was aging, there was a higher risk of failure. The equipment was routing and handling all traffic across their networks, so the impact on business continuity if it failed was significant,”* said McGarrigle.

*“We knew that even though their tradesmen would continue to work, they would not be able to communicate with customers, between sites, or to the head office until it was solved. This would severely reduce their productivity and efficiency while adding extra pressure to their teams.”*

Since the infrastructure had been installed, shifts in workplace methods led to different traffic patterns on the network. A growth in application use, and adoption of cloud technologies, meant the business was outgrowing its old network. In particular, users increasingly needed to work with higher resolution content from Citrix, CCTV, and other graphical applications. Outages affected efficiency and hampered the effectiveness of business continuity processes.

*“The overall business is already good at understanding problems. Their users would act quickly when the network was not working, and they would find a way to work around it. However, even with this mindset in place, staff productivity was still impacted. Finding work arounds could also slow them down,”* said McGarrigle.

With traditional networking technology, troubleshooting and maintenance can be time-consuming for IT staff. A more manageable outcome, employing a greater level of automation, would free time for skilled staff to work on other projects. The need for change, was not only about reducing problems. The IT team wanted to seize the opportunity to align its network technology to future business needs, so they set about analysing both the current situation and expected business growth to determine what would give the best return. It was anticipated that capacity needs could easily double over the next five years. Cisco Application Centric Infrastructure (Cisco ACI) was identified as a strong contender to meet the needs of the growing business.

*“It was important that if the customer was going to invest a significant amount in replacing their equipment, we wanted to make sure that what they were getting was going to suit future requirements. The customer needed assurance that any new solution would support the business now and also allow for future business growth,”* explained McGarrigle.

*“The Data#3 team worked closely with the customer's in-house teams who highlighted they were increasing their interactions with external parties. This meant the teams were accessing these external systems directly, and whatever we put in place had to cover how they saw the business change from that perspective.”*



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## IT Outcome

Data#3 conducted several workshops, using (pdo)2 PredICTor methodology, to increase understanding of the existing network. These workshops also explored how ACI would solve many key issues the organisation was experiencing. ACI uses an intent-based networking framework that captures user and business intent, and uses this intelligence to dynamically provision network, security, and infrastructure services. It performs especially well in multi-site situations, matching well with the business structure. The workshops were designed to help staff gain a deeper awareness of the changes emerging in how the business uses the network.

Using Data#3’s PredICTor methodology, the implementation team of project managers and delivery engineers were able to ensure consistency across all sites. PredICTor employs a structured and transparent approach, so that the IT team was fully aware of progress at every turn.

*“It was a key priority for the Data#3 team, that as the new technology was deployed there would be as little disruption to business continuity as possible. We know that things change, and our teams worked closely with the customer to make sure that the project was as agile as needed to support the business,”* explained McGarrigle.

This flexibility was especially valuable as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. Dealing with sites and customers in many locations, each with its own set of rules, made for a highly complex situation. True to their reputation for service excellence, the organisation worked with its customers to help them navigate a disrupted landscape. As some projects were fast-tracked, while others had to slow to suit changing legislation, the window of opportunity for implementing the new network frequently shifted.

*“The customer took the time to understand what COVID-19 meant to them as an organisation and how they could move forward. Our team was then able to adjust resourcing to match what was needed,”* said McGarrigle.

With various work sites spanning several differing time zones, and its projects often operate around the clock, there is ‘no good time’ for downtime, and reliability is key. The application-centric nature of the Cisco ACI architecture gives it a more common framework, making issue resolution more intuitive for both network operations and systems teams in the organisation. Centralised network management, and visibility of on and off-premises traffic, erode the management burden associated with traditional networking technology. An important element was automation, with approximately 75% of core networking tasks now automated by Cisco ACI. Aiding the IT team still further, real-time network health monitoring means near-zero downtime, so the customers skilled in-house team can spend less time on problem solving.

## Business Outcome

One of the core benefits of the organisation’s approach is sustainability, with a focus on effective management of economic, environmental, and social impacts of its business. This matched well with the Cisco emphasis on more efficient infrastructure that reduces power demands and is manufactured with the environmental impact firmly in mind. It was important that Data#3 factored in this prime consideration.

*“With any solution we deliver to a customer, we need to understand what their core values are and what drives the organisation. This allows our teams to make sure the investment they are making in technology not only does what it needs to, but also leaves the door open for digital transformation as the business grows,”* said McGarrigle.

Addressing productivity challenges caused by the previous network was of utmost importance, since any inefficiency can affect project margins for the leading engineering business. Workers can now reliably connect and communicate and use even the most graphic dense applications without a hitch.



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## **Cisco ACI Solution**

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“This new technology positions the organisation to better support their users. As traffic patterns change, they can increase the use of Software as a Service applications, and they know the devices we have put in will cater for that,” commented McGarrigle.

It could have been easy for the challenges of COVID-19 to derail such a critical project, but with customers and colleagues around the world needing support, their IT team was determined to get the job done, even if that meant making some adjustments.

*“Despite these adjustments, our team still delivered the new solution to the approved budget requirements. The organisation has over 100 sites that they provide connectivity to across the world, so this was a major achievement for their in-house IT team who now have a network that offers a strong foundation for future technologies,”* explained McGarrigle.

## **Conclusion**

Choosing the right partner is a critical success factor when embarking on a project. The organisation’s decision to leverage Data#3’s expertise, as a Cisco Gold partner with Cisco Master specialisation, along with a track record in similar projects, was a key part of the journey.

*“Undertaking a major network project can be daunting to any organisation, but it is important that you find the right partner who understands your business’s attitude towards technology as well as its future plans,”* explained McGarrigle.

That choice does not necessarily mean a partner that complies with every demand. It is valuable to work with experienced project managers and engineers who know when to challenge established thinking.

*“When we first spoke with the customer, they had a traditional approach to replace the equipment, a very structured approach, where new equipment would sit side-by-side with the old. The impact of that would have been longer outages which would be detrimental to business.”*

*“Our partnership with Cisco meant the customer was able to leverage the experience and knowledge of our highly skilled team to utilise a different approach that minimised downtime by changing the way that equipment was configured. We took into account what was important for the customer so they could get the best outcome in the most efficient way,”* concluded McGarrigle.