
BBC News

BBC News is the largest broadcasting news operation in the world with more than 2000 journalists and 48 newsgathering bureaux, 41 of which are overseas. BBC News gathers and produces national daily news, business, political and current affairs programmes for BBC television and radio. It is also responsible for the continuous news channels BBC News 24, BBC Parliament, BBC World Interactive, Ceefax and the BBC News Online.

Background

BBC News has been an NCAT client for 4 years, firstly rolling out a customized LAN Switching course to support a digital video editing project. This was followed by a network training roll out across the main BBC News department responsible for setting up temporary networks enabling news teams to capture, edit and relay news footage back to Television Centre for transmission. This flexibility reduced costs and shortened lead times for news items enabling faster reporting. Following the success of these two projects we were subsequently asked to provide a combination of consultancy and training for a Cisco VPN solution.

Challenges

BBC News had identified the requirement to replace the existing 'evolved' VPN with a more resilient commercial based solution due to the increased reliance on this technology for both live broadcasts and delivery of pre-edited material to Television Centre. To reduce tight project time scales and utilise NCAT's experience in delivering VPN solutions we were asked to advise on equipment selection, VPN design, configuration and installation together with training the engineers to support the delivered solution. The developed training course mirrored the new VPN design and utilized the same technologies. By eliminating non relevant subjects this focused approach enabled 'break/fix' sessions whilst still fitting around the constant requirement of a 24/7 operation.

Benefits

Utilizing local internet connections, news items can be relayed back to Television Centre without the need for expensive dedicated satellite links. This not only reduces costs but also increases flexibility. In addition to a delivered VPN solution the tailored training provided an understanding of the VPN design and configuration to ensure the support team had the necessary depth of knowledge to expand and troubleshoot the design to ensure the continuous operation within a 24 hour News environment.

Conclusions

Following the success of this project NCAT were asked to develop an in house training course to enable cross training of engineers to support IT networks. The course focus is networking but from a practical aspect and solves many of the unique problems that the BBC faces given its demanding environment. This course is now available across the BBC and continues to be delivered at the BBC in house training centre.