

Case Study

Z Energy Sets the Stage for Next-Gen Customer Experience Through Managed Secure SD-WAN



Even before Covid-19 ravaged the global economy, Z Energy's legacy network was showing its age and nearing the end of its lifecycle. At 10-years old, New Zealand's leading fuel retailer saw the critical pain point coming 18 months out, and management was aware of the growing need to modernize its network infrastructure.

Though a major upgrade was on its radar, a sudden decision by the incumbent provider to exit the market, alongside the growing threat of Covid-19, forced network transformation to the top of management's priority list.

Business Challenge

Z Energy (Z) operates more than 208 service stations, about 160 truck stops and supports another 130 owner operated service stations with digital services across New Zealand, serving retail and large commercial customers. The capabilities of the incumbent network had been eroding and with the pandemic's sudden impact, the brand couldn't afford to lose the trust it had built with consumers over many years.

Z's leadership saw the need to continue on their journey of investing in innovation to strengthen the customer experience and site systems managers saw the opportunity to improve the connectivity between their systems and customer touchpoints with a more resilient, robust and reliable network.

The company is dedicated to keeping the country fueled and on-the-move, and its steadfast buyer/seller relationship is based on a promise to innovate, alongside a heavy dose of "Kiwi attitude."

With pandemic shutdowns, outages, and supply chain continuity problems, network criticality rose to the top of management's concern. At the same time, customers' patience with payment friction, network shutdowns and tolerance for disruption was quickly dwindling. Operational resilience, business continuity and security assurance became paramount corporate objectives.

"We're an ambitious company, and there's a lot we want to accomplish," said Andrew Stewart, Head of Site Systems at Z Energy. "We were already feeling compromised by legacy infrastructure, and our networks' lifecycle was clearly on the horizon. To maintain market dominance, we needed to leverage the full potential of 'what's next' in terms of speed, connectivity and security to match customer demands in the new post-pandemic world of omni-channel digital infrastructures."

Solution

Subsequently, Z embraced digital transformation with a comprehensive strategy that was mindful of complexity and enabled streamlining and strengthening key functions. In creating a next-generation frictionless customer experience, Z chose TNS to integrate connectivity touchpoints while increasing processing power into a secure, private, software-defined network.

With TNS' Secure SD-WAN, Z implemented a seamless connectivity and network infrastructure as a managed service. Z's retail network and security are centrally controlled and continuously monitored by TNS. Backed up by TNS' infrastructure security partner Fortinet, Z also now has additional security protections and protocols such as anti-virus controls with anti-malware and spyware, URL filtering and TLS packet inspection, dynamic policy management and regular firmware updates.

SD-WAN performs effective in-store application traffic management and multi-path failover routing. With TNS Secure SD-WAN managed network solution implemented for Z, the network works at a higher level, providing data communications between the head office and to myriad devices on every site. The routers and switches send the data where it needs to be when it's needed. All sites run on both primary and secondary communications which provide backup and the ability for switches to prioritize traffic.

"We're a 24/7 business, and all our sites need consistent infrastructure to stay operational and secure with five-nines reliability," said Stewart. "We need one service provider to support this goal, to call on, to coordinate with, and to sort out issues at any hour. TNS' managed service team, 24/7 dashboard oversight, and PCI DSS payment security assurance are key benefits."

"Absolutely everything that needs to connect gets connected, when and where we need it, with failovers from primary to secondary at every site," said Stewart. "Our mission-critical services can be maintained in a cyber-safe environment, while non-mission-critical can be de-prioritized which allows for more business options by avoiding additional strain on the comms and data usage."

The Outcome

With Z's infrastructure upgrade, operational speed, reliability, and security were dramatically improved by partnering with TNS.

Z's retail sites are running smarter and faster with a range of new capabilities such as monitoring and analyzing customer movement, electronic controls over in-store digital signage, connected ovens, CCTV, automatic number plate recognition for payments, EV charging stations, and other touchpoints. Dozens of on-site devices can plug in to a single switch with more precise and uniform configuration across several different site types. The time-saving benefits are only starting to be realized as the new managed system shines in stark contrast to the slow speeds of the old network.

Security, and the need to get new sites online quickly, was one of the first conversations between Z and TNS. It's now a single button push to download security settings onto a new site, and the entire site time setup has been greatly reduced from six hours to thirty minutes.

"There's less administration for us, and so much more we can do that we haven't even imagined yet," said Stewart. "The list of innovations keeps getting longer, and the capabilities and speed that we have now with the TNS Secure SD-WAN service has really put our previous limitations in surprising perspective."

TNS Secure SD-WAN brings new and more secure digital experience for customers who want user-friendly, zero-touch environments. Additional benefits include stronger resiliency and connectivity uptime, reduced total cost and complexity of ownership, greater flexibility and scalability, lower risk of outages, the ability to quickly manage more devices and consumer touchpoints, and accelerated transaction settlement volume.



"We love the service," continues Stewart, "and the new system opens up new opportunities for us as we continue to evolve as a business."

With a real push toward value-add mobile applications that allow customers to do more without needing to wait in a queue, Z continues to build its brand with a relentless focus on improving the customer experience.

"We're one of the largest retailers in the country, and payments are mission-critical to our operations," said Stewart. "We've operated in the same payments ecosystem for a decade, and our options were becoming more constrained. By deploying TNS' Secure SD-WAN as a managed service, we deliver the capabilities and network platform performance that we need now to get us where we're going."



**To learn more about TNS' connectivity solutions,
please contact our team.**

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