



MANAGED SD-WAN:

HOW PLAN INTERNATIONAL, A GLOBAL CHILDREN'S CHARITY, ADOPTED TENEEO'S SD-WAN MANAGED SERVICE TO REDUCE COSTS AND IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY ACROSS ITS REMOTE LOCATIONS.

AT A GLANCE

- Plan International has worked with Teneo for over 10 years and was initially suffering from poor connectivity, particularly in its remote locations. This made it difficult for staff to complete everyday tasks.
- To help remedy this issue, Plan International originally engaged Teneo's assistance with WAN Optimization, which resulted in improved application performance, in some cases up to 8 times faster.
- In the past 5 years, technology has improved and bandwidth has become more affordable, leading Plan International to re-evaluate WAN Optimization costs along with their required features.
- While their WAN Optimization appliances were robust, rather than running them unsupported, the organization chose Teneo's Support for Riverbed SteelHead.
- For sites with latency and heavy media use, optimization is critical. This led the team to explore SD-WAN combined with WAN Optimization to help them deliver maximum throughput.
- A strategy was identified that would result in significant cost savings per month and saw the Plan International team transition to the Aruba EdgeConnect SD-WAN Platform (formerly known as the Silver Peak Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN Edge Platform), and an SD-WAN Managed Service from Teneo.



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Founded in 1937, Plan International is a development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls. The non-profit organization strives for a just world, working together with children, young people, supporters, and partners. In 2020, they reached 26.9 million girls and 24 million boys through their work.

The Plan International global family is active in 77 countries worldwide, organized into National Offices, which engage in activities including raising funds, recruiting supporters, and campaigning in their nations and Country Offices.

Bhavin Patel, Head of IT Infrastructure, has worked at Plan International for 8 years and has seen 4 restructures. Contributing to the central strategy, Bhavin has a team of 7 infrastructure staff: 2 in The Philippines, 1 in Guatemala and 4 in the UK. Bhavin relies on third parties for relevant expertise.

“Our overarching goal is to provide the best user experience. Before working with Teneo, very often our team would have to wait up to 55 minutes for a report, which was of course significantly impacting productivity. By working with Teneo to implement a solution, we’ve increased productivity and have saved both time and money.”

Bhavin Patel
Head of IT Infrastructure, Plan International

PREVIOUS WAY OF OPERATING & BUSINESS LIMITATIONS

Plan International has worked with Teneo for 10 years, and over this period, technology has dramatically changed. They'd originally been faced with poor connectivity links in their remote locations, getting 0.5Mbps if they were fortunate. As a result, they'd found that they weren't able to complete everyday tasks.

Satellite connectivity was also very expensive in some areas. For example, in West Africa, where there's limited infrastructure, 1Mbps per month cost the organization \$2,780.



To help remedy this issue at the time, Plan International engaged Teneo's assistance with WAN Optimization. With Teneo's WAN Optimization Managed Service, the company was able to accelerate performance so that it improved on average by 4-5 times, and in some cases, application performance was 8 times faster.

Critical applications include training, HR, and SAP for finance, which are extremely bandwidth-hungry. For example, a procurement report can contain 400MB of data and would previously take up to 55 minutes to open on a good site.

With WAN Optimization, this was reduced to 14 minutes. As WAN Optimization caches the attachments, Plan saw a 50% reduction in email volume and also experienced vast improvements when accessing SharePoint files.

A BETTER WAY FORWARD WITH TENEO

In the last 5 years, however, technology has evolved. Plan International originally had a deployment of Riverbed's SteelHead WAN Optimization technology across 161 sites internationally, which Teneo managed. But in locations like Vietnam, Egypt, India and Latin America, bandwidth is now much more affordable at £100 per month for 10Mbps.

"I knew that for many sites, we no longer needed to incur the full cost of WAN Optimization technology," said Bhavin Patel, Head of IT Infrastructure. "As an international charity, keeping costs low is incredibly important to us."

While the WAN Optimization appliances were robust, Bhavin was reluctant to keep them running unsupported. So instead, for the last 3 years, he's relied on Teneo's Support for Riverbed SteelHead, which delivers access to the Teneo Service Desk 24x7x365, proactive and predictive monitoring, an annual tune-up service, and hardware support. Plan International's regional offices contribute to the funding of this service through their individual budgets.

One of Plan International's strategic goals is to maximize income, and one of their strategic enablers is to 'Think Digital'. This includes moving to tablets in the field and delivering better data, as well as providing a portal and mobile app to sponsors. For the sites with latency and heavy use of media, optimization is critical to support these initiatives.

This led the team to explore the option of SD-WAN combined with WAN Optimization. The incumbent Riverbed SteelHead solution had always featured at the top right of Gartner's Magic Quadrant for WAN Optimization, however only a small number of features were required by Plan International. This drove them to seek a more cost-effective option, but one that would deliver maximum throughput.

A strategy was identified that would result in significant cost savings per month and saw the Plan International team transition to Aruba's EdgeConnect SD-WAN Platform (formerly known as the Silver Peak Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN Edge Platform). This replaced Riverbed's solution, like-for-like, which also resulted in a 65% saving.

VSAT sites were mandatory in the migration, and after 9 months, the team has rolled out to 21 sites. SD-WAN is being used at sites other than those with VSAT to optimize locations with dual connectivity for extra resilience. Child data users, who deal with sensitive information relating to vulnerable children, and management staff producing large reports have seen the greatest benefits.

"Our overarching goal is to provide the best user experience," said Bhavin. "Before working with Teneo, very often our team would have to wait up to 55 minutes for a report, which was of course significantly impacting productivity. By working with Teneo to implement a solution, we've increased productivity and have saved both time and money."



SERVICE VALUE

To help Plan International build their business case for change, Teneo facilitated a discovery workshop and produced an extensive report to help the organization determine what they wanted from a solution.

Bhavin commented, "Carrying out this strategic work to define key advantages of SD-WAN saved significant time and effort."

Teneo's lead engineer also assessed the connectivity scenarios to help define the best options. A trial was then carried out in October 2020 to prove that the optimization levels delivered by Aruba's Boost Unified WAN Optimization feature were as good as those delivered by Riverbed SteelHead. Findings concluded that performance was in fact better, and statistics were even further boosted for O365 and finance systems.

"Teneo's services represent really good value. They know our business well and they have thorough knowledge and experience," explains Bhavin. "Like many of us, I'm in meetings 3.5 days out of 5 so I don't have time to chase partners. I rely on reporting from partners like Teneo, as well as new ideas and innovation."

"The commitment from the service team is exceptional, and I appreciate the honest answers that Teneo provides. They've been especially helpful with shipping and clearance in Africa. The team are also great fun to work with!"



NEXT STEPS

For more information about Teneo's SD-WAN Managed Services, visit:

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