Large Telecommunications Service provider makes monitoring a priority for its MEA-centric MPLS VPN

*Breaking new ground means no shortage of opportunities for innovation. Through powerful collaboration, the Sub-Saharan Telecommunications Group and Iris Networking Systems have shaped a monitoring and alerting system that is flexible, responsive and satisfies the Group’s stringent reporting requirements to add value to enterprise customers across Africa and beyond.*
The Group had already experienced success with Iris Network Systems, as a local South African service provider familiar with the ISP environment and agile enough to adapt its offering to the Group's brief - which would need to be defined before it could be built. Iris was equally keen to expand its relationship with the group globally, and stepped up to the challenge.

Breaking new ground means no shortage of opportunities for innovation – or obstacles to overcome. It took powerful collaboration between the Group and Iris to shape a monitoring and alerting system that was flexible, functional, and satisfied the Group’s custom reporting requirements. “We worked together through the initial phases, consulting and advising until we were all happy with the expected outcome,” says Birch. In the end, Iris was able to tick all these boxes in a manner that was surprisingly cost effective for our client.

**Challenge**

When the Group introduced its Global MPLS VPN (Multi-protocol Label Switching Virtual Private Network) in 2014, its intent was to leverage off the Group’s undersea cable investments and its 24 operations across Africa and the Middle East to offer enterprise customers a seamless managed network service.

“The Global MPLS VPN project was virtually a greenfield. While the network would eventually connect key network Point-of-Presence in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Djibouti, Tanzania and the United Kingdom, it needed to be built.” explains IRIS Network Solutions Managing Director, Stuart Birch. “A lot of what the Group was offering would be delivered as managed services so their success would hinge on how well they were able to deliver on the SLAs put forward”.

For the Group, this meant finding the means to effectively monitor its performance on multiple levels: voice, data and video and enable a rapid, proactive approach to any outages on what would become business critical networks for its enterprise customers.

*Our client was able to provide benefits to their customers by being more proactive and having a shorter mean time to respond and repair, their customers were also able to log in and see for themselves that the Group was measuring up and meeting the necessary SLAs.*

**Solution**

The Group had already experienced success with Iris Network Systems, as a local South African service provider familiar with the ISP environment and agile enough to adapt its offering to the Group’s brief - which would need to be defined before it could be built. Iris was equally keen to expand its relationship with the group globally, and stepped up to the challenge.

- **About the Telecommunications Group**

  Launched in 1994, the Group is a leading emerging market operator, connecting subscribers in 22 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

  As of 30 June 2013, they recorded 201.5 million subscribers across its operations in Afghanistan, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Cyprus, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Republic, Iran, Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of Congo (Congo Brazzaville), Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.
The Group’s data superhighway currently connects key locations to deliver global scale, high-quality network and world-class support. It uses Iris Core to provision and report on IPSLA tests on this network. Iris provides critical alerting on threshold breaches and down statuses, enabling the business to respond quickly and communicate proactively with its customers. It also monitors the Group’s core network, which links its operational entities together in Africa and the Middle East as a managed service.

Iris NS ably supports the Group’s requirement to manage and report on its monitoring to ISO 270001 standards, while continually adding and upgrading reporting features and functionality in response to evolving needs.

Value Derived

Support for Managed Services

Customers across several sectors, including financial services, logistics, gas and oil, manufacturing and retail, are able to completely outsource their Wide Area Network (WAN), Local Area Network (LAN) and Customer Premises Equipment management requirements to this extensive Telecommunication Group.

*The measurability and visibility the Telecommunications Group acquired of an expansive and complex network enabled them to go from ‘zero’ to a really good understanding of their performance. They literally shifted from reactive to responsive.*

Delivery at this level requires commitment from the entire business and its partners. “It was critical for the Group to have the right tools from the outset to be able to support these managed services,” explains Birch. “We assist our client to do this through the functionality we offer. Our Service is ISP centric and the multi-tenancy our client needs is easily accommodated. As managed service providers who are available 24/7/365 we were able to align with our client’s requirements with little effort.”

Improved Communication Channels with Customers

The Group’s customers have visibility of their network through the ISP’s Global Network Operations Centre (NOC). This is managed in-house by a team of highly skilled professionals across technical and business disciplines. “Visibility into the customer service centre, particularly in terms of performance, was something that had been missing from a Global NOC perspective. The Group wanted to be able to add this and have done so through Iris. Besides the obvious benefits of being more proactive and a shorter mean time to respond and repair (15 minutes is now what is defined in most SLAs) Iris enables the Group’s customers to log in and see for themselves that they are measuring up and meeting the SLAs the Group committed to explains Birch.
Accurate measurement equals better management – and happier customers

With the ability to effectively monitor its environment, services towards the Group’s customers improved dramatically. “The measurability and visibility they acquired of an expansive and complex network enabled them to go from ‘zero’ to a really good understanding of their performance. They shifted from reactive to responsive,” concludes Birch. “It’s a better outcome for their customers, as they are able to support and improve these services to them. Happy customers in our client’s business means better business - and more business for them down the line.”