



PANOPTICS

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Aggregate Industries

Complex SD-WAN rollout to
over 230 sites for the UK's
leading building materials
and solutions company

Aggregate Industries (AI) are at the frontline of the UK's construction and infrastructure industries, producing and supplying a huge range of building and construction materials. With over 230 sites distributed across the UK and around 3900 members of staff, the business is the largest of its kind in the UK.

From its huge network of branch locations, AI supplies everything from aggregates and asphalt to ready-mixed and precast concrete products, alongside producing, importing and exporting materials worldwide.

Following the identification that their existing network infrastructure, including a Cisco VPN solution and MPLS, was no longer capable of delivering the operational requirements needed, Aggregate Industries went to market to find a new solution.

Discovering SD-WAN

With no prior knowledge of [SD-WAN technology](#), AI were immediately impressed by its capabilities after being introduced to the technology by a previous network provider. Following their own analysis, AI quickly understood why Enterprises are adopting the technology and the benefits the organisation could leverage across their large distributed network.

Diverse Branch Site Locations

Aggregate Industries' sites are by nature, complex and widely distributed across the entire country, from city centres to rural countryside locations in the remotest parts of the UK. Amongst the 230 locations there are single occupancy sites, six large call centres, quarries, and two production data centres. It was imperative therefore, to get the balance of the network connectivity just right to accommodate the wide range of requirements. The existing MPLS estate was no longer sufficiently capacious for the demands of the business. Additionally, adding more MPLS circuits was deemed too costly. SD-WAN presented an alternative solution. The technology delivering mission critical services capably using low-cost, commodity Internet connections. Sites could be migrated from MPLS or have their bandwidth increased all at a cost-effective price point.

Why VMware SD-WAN

Taking the time to evaluate the market, AI quickly determined the added benefits of VMware SD-WAN over other vendors, including Cisco Meraki, Juniper and Silverpeak. Offering intelligent control of key functionalities such as 'packet by packet steering', AI knew there was only one option that could accommodate their complex requirements. VMware's unique Dynamic Multipath Optimisation technology, combined with their hosted gateway network won the day.

Remote locations within the estate included rural sites and ships in the Solent. These sites made use of multiple LTE connections in the absence of any cabled infrastructure whatsoever. VMware SD-WAN's ability to bond, failover and steer traffic with reference to link quality and available bandwidth means mission critical application delivery is guaranteed.

The Panoptics Difference

AI established that many prospective [SD-WAN service providers](#) would only offer a fully managed solution. Given AI's strong internal IT capabilities, a more flexible partner was sought. AI discovered Panoptics via VMware's Partner Programme.

Approaching SD-WAN differently to the rest of the market, it was immediately clear that Panoptics could offer a more flexible VMware SD-WAN solution that was tailored precisely to AI's requirements and internal knowledge. By working with AI's IT team, a solution was designed that was a perfect fit. Providing the technology and VMware SD-WAN expertise required, paired with measured deployment input and support.

Due to the size of the project combined with the complexities of many of AI's site locations, Panoptics supplied dedicated resources to support the challenging rollout. Everything from coordinating the connectivity installs by local loop suppliers to double and triple checking location details and appointments were handled meticulously to ensure a timely deployment. Additionally, a roving resource, colloquially known by AI as "the man in the van", was on hand throughout for site visits and localised support to ensure staff with limited IT familiarity at their busy branch locations had the necessary help exactly when they needed it.

" From the outset to BAU, our experience was great. Everyone across the company, from the board to the front line, was approachable and geared towards delivering confidence, that if the proverbial hit the issue quickly for us."

Phil Casson, Network Analyst, Aggregate Industries

Improved service for less money

As a direct result of the successful deployment of VMware SD-WAN, which stimulated the removal of all but essential MPLS connections and the migration of the vast majority of sites across to DIA, Aggregate Industries were able to realise a number of benefits, including a significant reduction in its OPEX, amongst other things.

The connectivity restrictions previously felt across many of their sites were also removed overnight. AI capitalised on the benefits brought by replacing expensive private circuits with low-cost DIA. Further advantages were realised by the reduction in the footprint and complexity of CPE devices. Panoptics were able to offer commodity bandwidth so keenly that greater throughput was delivered to many sites. Often replacing 10mb circuits with 100/1000 and 1000/1000 connections for less cost.

Furthermore, the new technology allows for simplified, centralised management of the entire network. Instead of managing the MPLS network, the DSL network, VPN's and assortment of other technologies in isolation, AI can manage the entire SD-WAN estate from the single pane of glass VMware Orchestrator.

By deploying SD-WAN, Aggregate Industries are happy to admit that it's made their tech team's life considerably easier and they're seeing far less network support calls to the service desk as a result. Reliability of their sites has only improved and they have the flexibility to exploit all available connectivity types with reduced complexity and enhanced security. Something which was simply impossible previously.

Benefits summary:

- Reduction in OPEX
- Improved bandwidth at all branch locations
- Reduced volume and complexity of CPE, associated management and maintenance
- Greater resilience and fault tolerance across the network
- Simple, centralised management of entire network
- Improved network security
- Streamlined, zero touch site deployment
- Complete choice of connectivity options per site

We're always available to discuss any IT Project and would welcome the opportunity to talk it through. Get in touch now and we're confident we will find the perfect solution for your business.

[Get in touch today.](#)