



A Big Show for *Hosted Telephony*

With no other equal in the world the Farnborough International Airshow is a logistical monster of an exhibition at which for the first time hosted IP telephony is played a huge part in keeping the communications flowing

The 46th edition of the Farnborough International Airshow celebrates its 60th Anniversary that commemorates its first show in 1948 held for the very first time at the Farnborough Aerodrome.

No matter how many shows you have been to nothing will compare to the vast scale of the Farnborough event. Now held every two years planning for the next show is an ongoing continuous process – even more so for 2008 as the site turned to hosted telephony for delivery of its core voice and data communication.

It would be easy to trot out a list of facts and figures to put the show in perspective:

Farnborough is the largest temporary event held in the world

- In 2008, 1393 exhibitors attended
- In 2008, there were 285,636 visitors over seven days
- \$88.7 billion in sales registered in 2008

- 3 miles from end to end
- Almost 100km of comms cable laid
- 1000+ IP phones installed
- 3000 public IP addresses deployed

The main players in providing the voice and data communications for the event were Ben Wilson, Commercial Director of reseller WirelessLAN Source and Rob Murdoch, Sales Director at hosted IP telephony provider Pipecentric.

Ben Wilson, “We started on site in November 2007 with developing our plans for the Airshow and other exhibitions that take place there throughout the year and in January 2008 began deploying comms facilities for exhibitions such as IHG and Drive '08.”

In March this year the task of laying all the cable around the site began. WirelessLAN Source has a six year contract and the infrastructure needed to be robust, resilient and

re-usable for future events.

“Towards the end of March we also began the first deployments of hosted IP telephony and internal communications to meet the requirements of the event organisers and in June we began making internet and email services available for visitors and exhibitors.

“Some exhibiting companies bring along their own IP PBX systems for their massive stands and in these instances they are provided with SIP trunks only. However 90% of the infrastructure we have put in place is reusable.

Wi-Fi access is essential throughout the entire site and we have deployed 55 high density access points from Xirrus, a provider of enterprise class wireless systems. It was anticipated that over the course of the Airshow that somewhere between 30,000 and 60,000 wireless access passes would be sold.”

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Services

Every exhibitor had access to a wide range of services whether they were taking a booth in a hall or a large custom built chalet. Asynchronous Internet services were available; however, the pervasive use of VPN technology to link with central offices meant that many exhibitors took advantage of high speed-synchronous connections.

“WirelessLAN Source’s ability to provide flexible, customised services to exhibitors is

points to the flexible approach his company takes towards provisioning temporary events such as the Farnborough International Airshow. “For example, we are able to provide user licences for a shorter period such as the duration of a show which saves the user a considerable amount of money when compared to other suppliers with say a one year minimum contract period.”

Rollinson comments further about his choice of suppliers when he says, “You can only judge a supplier when things go wrong. That is when you see how fast they respond to any situation and resolve any problem by putting things right.”

WirelessLAN Source had up to 18 staff permanently on site during the show and worked a fault ticketing system to resolve problems that were either emailed or phoned through to their on-site control centre.

“Compared to the communications set up for the last show in 2006 much has changed according to Ben Wilson. “Every single piece of communication, whether voice or data, is now

transmitted over IP. In 2006 there were literally hundreds of ISDN lines compared to this year when just 50 lines were installed. Some customers want specific PBX systems for their use on site. Pipecentric for example supplied SIP trunks to seven Zultys PBX systems.

“This is the largest temporary network in the world and special mention must go to our project manager Bob Alborough who made sure everything went in and functioned like clockwork and Dafydd Hirst our lead engineer.”

Hosted Telephony

Rob Murdoch’s company Pipecentric has two hosted telephony platforms located in Tele City and Tele House.

“When you are providing a hosted telephony solution, especially a deployment as large and as high profile as Farnborough International Airshow, it is essential to get all of the component parts to the solution right.”

Jeremy Rollinson, Managing Director of Wireless LAN

Source, discussing the technical implications said, “We worked very closely with the technical team at Pipecentric to create a stable technical solution for this ambitious project. A total of three 100Mbps leased lines were ordered to support the voice and Internet requirements for the show. We deployed both fully hosted services and SIP trunks to exhibitors, load balancing groups of users across multiple links and hardware.”

The fact that the contract to supply communications for the show was won by a smaller company such as WirelessLAN Source is remarkable but understandable considering their pedigree in supplying many similar, though smaller sites such as music festivals, in the past.

“We fully understand the technology,” says Ben Wilson, “It’s a technical sale and the emergency services – even more critical at an event such as this, were very sceptical that we could deliver 999 calls in the event of a disaster or an emergency. However, we were able to demonstrate that not only could we handle 999 calls but also supply the location dependent information showing where on the huge site the call was coming from.”



completely unique and facilitated only through our innovative use of networking technologies. Traditional telecommunications providers are now a square peg for a round hole when it comes to events.” says Jeremy Rollinson.

Jeremy went on to say that he chose the Pipecentric hosted telephony solution above others because he worked with the company on previous temporary locations in the past.

“The Pipecentric solution delivers the reliance and ease of use that we and our customers demand and now expect.

They have an excellent provisioning portal for their services and to deploy more than 1000 IP handsets in such a short space of time shows the professionalism residing in their organisation. That and the fact that they have soft switches in two locations for resiliency demonstrated the degree of differentiation we wanted.”

Rob Murdoch also



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