Cato Cloud the perfect antidote to OBG's network challenges

OBG PHARMACEUTICALS

Industry

Multiple

Key challenges

- Impending MPLS renewal deadline
- Need to deliver an improved remote access solution
- A desire to unify network management, configuration, and security within a single solution

Solution

- Fast implementation of a Cato remote access solution in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Easy deployment of Cato Cloud SASE solution across 9 individual sites

Business benefits

- Simple administration with a unified solution
- Enhanced connectivity from a software-defined architecture
- Enhanced scalability with easy deployment for new sites

Industry-leading SASE platform delivers simplified management and easy deployment

OBG Pharmaceuticals Ltd is a UK-based group focused on supporting innovation within science-led markets.

With a large workforce spread across multiple sites, and a need to support better remote and mobile working, the business was keen to implement a new access solution that could be more easily deployed at scale.

Equally, with a desire to explore Software-defined Wide Area Networks (SD-WAN) as an alternative to the traditional MPLS WAN infrastructure, and a need to provide better security than their existing web proxy, OBG turned to Highlander in search of a unified solution.

Company overview

A UK-based group with a global reach, OBG Pharmaceuticals Ltd provides investment and support for niche and entrepreneurial organisations within science-led markets.

The challenge

With a multi-subsidiary group staffed by over 300 users working both remotely and from multiple sites, OBG faced several challenges stemming from its core network infrastructure.

Keen to find an improved remote access solution to better support an increasingly mobile workforce, an upcoming MPLS contract deadline was also acting as a catalyst to explore an alternative network architecture. SD-WAN was earmarked early as a possible solution.

Additionally, the business was also focused on how it could better secure its network to facilitate improved web filtering and was keen to move away from its current web proxy platform.

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With individual solutions already in place for both network and security, OBG was weary of time-consuming "swivel-chair" administration. As such, there was also a desire to discover whether every challenge could be overcome with a single solution that could deliver easier deployment, greater control, and an improved management experience.

"We weren't sure what was available within the market, but we thought it would be great if we could find a single solution that could meet all of our requirements" commented Thanos Zafiriu, Infrastructure Administrator. "We thought it would be easier to manage one tool rather than continuing to interchange between multiple platforms".

After some initial research one potential option was explored, but ultimately was not a viable solution. Undeterred by this setback, OBG continued to search and reached out for assistance from their IT partner Highlander, who they had worked with for several years.

The solution

With the goals in mind Highlander undertook a thorough review of the options available. Following discussions together the shortlist was further narrowed down to Cato Networks' cloud-based Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) solution as the best-fit for all OBG's needs.

A new networking technology category introduced by Gartner in 2019, SASE solutions see the convergence of enterprise network functions with security posture as part of a single cloud-native solution. This reduces the level of operational complexity, offering increased flexibility and an ease of deployment and management unachievable with traditional architecture.

Cato Networks' Cato Cloud platform was recognised as the World's first SASE solution, and converges SD-WAN, a global private connectivity backbone, and a complete network security stack alongside seamless support for both on-premises and cloud resources.

OBG was immediately impressed by the Cato Cloud offering. "We thought that the Cato solution was interesting and had lots of potential for us. From the moment we first saw its capabilities we were keen to try it." Zafiriu added.

After some final qualification, OBG engaged an initial Proof of Concept (PoC) at its Milton Keynes data centre, as well as a smaller remote site in Liverpool. If successful, the solution would then be rolled out to their additional seven sites, including the group Head Office also located in Liverpool.

Highlander

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However, with the PoC successfully completed at the start of the year, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic saw plans change. Instead of completing the rollout across the remaining branch sites, focus turned to enabling remote access to support essential home working for more than 300 users. Activated through the Cato platform in just a matter of hours, it was a mission-critical action that would have not been so easily achieved using their old solutions.

"Cato's remote access solution was a great help for the team. The new Cato appliance added to our data centre site meant that all our users could easily access the data and applications needed via a client-based portal" Zafiriu remarked, adding "the feedback from the team was that the solution worked well, and they were very satisfied with the ease of use and availability".

With a suitable remote access solution in place, implementation at the remaining sites was re-scheduled, and it was agreed that Zafiriu and OBG would undertake this implementation themselves, with Highlander and Cato on hand to assist when required.

Despite some internal challenges with configuration, existing connectivity arrangements, and complications with incumbent MPLS providers, OBG was able to complete a full roll out at each site in just a few weeks, thanks to the support and assistance of Highlander and Cato.

"We had some challenges with the implementation which were caused by internal issues, but this was something we always anticipated with a new solution" Zafiriu commented. "Highlander and Cato were always available to offer advice and support when needed, and they really helped us to overcome those obstacles to get up and running".

Business benefits and results

Simple network administration from a unified solution

Thanks to Cato's intuitive management portal, OBG's team no longer need to manage the network, remote access, and network security posture from individual platforms. "Being able to manage everything through a single piece of software is so much easier for us" Zafiriu remarked. "The management portal is really intuitive and having all of the tools and information in one place gives us better visibility and control".

![Highlander logo]

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Specialist solutions

- **Infrastructure**
- **Protection**
- **Cloud**
- ERP
- Workspace
- Services

Enhanced connectivity

"Now that Cato is in place, we've definitely noticed an improvement in connectivity" commented Zafiriu, adding "moving away from our existing MPLS has allowed us to add a designated internet breakout at each site, which has contributed to a significant improvement in performance".

Scalability with self-deployment

The plug and play nature of Cato's solution means that OBG can easily scale its network to new sites if required, with a single on-site appliance the only requirement for the setup of new branches. Everything else can be managed remotely via the management portal, with real-time configuration and troubleshooting available to Zafiriu and his colleagues.

Working with Highlander

> "We've worked with Highlander for several years and have always found it to be a positive experience. They were able to identify a solution that could satisfy multiple requirements, and in Cato we found the technology that delivers everything we need" Thanos Zafiriu, Infrastructure Administrator.

Highlander

CATO NETWORKS