



Case Study: **Avocent helps Royal & SunAlliance to grow IT infrastructure, not costs**

“We have successfully managed the growth in our IT environment without a corresponding proportional growth in support costs. For an organisation of our scale, this is a noteworthy achievement.”

*Gerry Hayes – Network Support
Team Manager, Royal & SunAlliance*

- Royal & SunAlliance is one of the world’s leading international insurance groups. The corporation’s activities span property, casualty and life insurance and risk management services. Employing 38,000 people and transacting business in 130 countries, the company has approximately 20 million customers around the globe.

At its operations in Dublin, Ireland, Royal & SunAlliance (R&SA) has approximately 600 staff, the majority of whom are located at a campus site comprising three separate buildings. The company also operates branch offices with a smaller number of staff throughout Ireland.

The infrastructure explained

R&SA’s IT department provides centralised network management services to the company’s entire Irish operations. Network monitoring and rapid incident response is a vital function tasked to a team of network administrators who maintain the smooth running of services throughout the business. In a customer-driven company, the capability to react with speed to any network issues is crucial, particularly if systems go down.

Gerry Hayes, Network Support Team Manager at Royal & SunAlliance, Ireland describes the infrastructure in place. “Our main insurance application runs on an AS/400 system. We also have close to 40 servers performing various functions from file and print to a number of applications such as Notes/Domino and Oracle. All the servers are running Windows 2000 or Windows NT. Seven of our servers form a Citrix server farm that enables half of our user population (over 300 users) to have PC functionality through a thin-client system,” he said.

“We have a Storage Area Network which manages all AS/400 data and the majority of our open systems data,” added Hayes. “The SAN consists of approximately 5 TB of storage that is split between the AS/400 and the open systems. An enterprise-level backup system is in place to make sure we have proper backups. We currently use a fibre attached LTO tape library for backups.”

In terms of connectivity, the company has a Gigabit Ethernet backbone and Layer-3 switching across the campus. All client systems connect at 100Mbps. Interconnection between the campus buildings located in Dublin’s city centre is over fast Ethernet Infrared and/or Long Reach Ethernet (LRE) technology.

With database requirements, document scanning, electronic messaging and workflow management systems in place, Royal & SunAlliance relies heavily on its network infrastructure. “We require permanent accessibility to our servers so as to ensure total response capability even outside office hours,” commented Hayes.

Growing for the future

Seeking to enhance their network management capability while ensuring future scalability, Royal & SunAlliance opted for a complete switching solution from Avocent. They installed three Avocent DSR™ 2161 16-port KVM over IP switches, a solution that was provided and integrated by Avocent partner, Enterprise Solutions.

“System visibility and control is vital when you’re dealing with remote environments,” commented Hayes. “It doesn’t matter if you’re talking about a thousand feet or a thousand miles, we need the ability to see into all buildings across our campus to know for certain that individual servers are performing to their full potential. The Avocent KVM over IP switching system allows us to more quickly access problem servers and in most cases to fix those problems remotely. As a result, our visits to the racks located in other buildings have greatly reduced.”

The Avocent DSR2161 KVM over IP switch enables users to access and control up to 16 servers per unit either at the rack or remotely over standard IP connections. The switch also uses DSRIQ smart cabling for an all CAT 5 solution to and from the rack. The cornerstone of its functionality lies in DSView™, the client-side Windows application from Avocent that provides secure Click and Connect™ control to any connected device, using IP connections.

“The GUI of Avocent’s DSView management tool is very user friendly. We have visibility into all of the available servers through just a handful of monitors. Selecting a server sets up a connection between DSView and the appropriate port in the DSR2161 and we can then control and troubleshoot the machine remotely.”

Improved security with Avocent KVM

Security was an important factor for R&SA when choosing a solution. “Most importantly, access is only available to the right people,” added Hayes. “Avocent’s DSAAuth user authentication software stores permissions, topology and

per-device contact information for the DS Series. It also performs third party authentication during connection to the switch. Accessibility to our various banks of servers depends on the level of authorisation which the user has been granted by management.”

Creating space

“CAT 5 connectivity is also invaluable to us. In a small data centre where space is at a premium, we can now substitute one CAT 5 cable in place of the bulky cables that were needed to connect every server to the previous KVM modules. For us, this has meant the elimination of a lot of cable clutter and has provided a more manageable rack infrastructure.

“We have successfully managed the growth in our IT environment without a corresponding proportional growth in support costs. For an organisation of our scale, this is a noteworthy achievement,” concluded Hayes. “Avocent’s KVM over IP switching system provides strong performance, flexibility and scalability. It was also integrated seamlessly and provides an overall improvement in our server management capability.”

About Avocent

Avocent is the leading worldwide supplier of KVM switching and connectivity solutions that provide IT managers with access and control of multiple servers and network datacentre devices. Avocent was formed in July 2000 by the merger of leading industry innovators Cybex Computer Products Corporation and Apex Inc. Avocent’s KVM solutions are distributed by the world’s largest server manufacturers and installed in Fortune 100 companies around the world.

Headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama, Avocent has locations in Redmond, Washington; Sunrise, Florida; Chelmsford, Massachusetts; Austin, Texas; Shannon, Ireland; London; Steinhagen, Germany; Tokyo; China; and Singapore. For more information about Avocent products, visit www.avocent-europe.com.



Avocent DSR2161



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