

UK's Largest Greyhound Track Operator Beats Security Odds with SonicWALL

GRA Limited (Greyhound Racing Association) is the UK's oldest greyhound racing operator. In 1926 the GRA staged Great Britain's first ever race at Belle Vue, Manchester watched by a crowd of 1700 people. Today, with a turnover of £28 million, GRA is the largest track operator with six stadiums at Oxford, Wimbledon, Portsmouth, Hall Green and Perry Barr in Birmingham and the original Belle Vue.

Central to GRA's business are its high-class restaurants where customers can dine and enjoy a grandstand view of the evening's racing spectacle. Restaurant tables for all stadia are pre-paid and booked centrally at a call centre in Manchester. The call centre deals with about a quarter of a million table bookings every year. Information on the reservation system is complex and subject to frequent change, according to the differing needs of customers from individual diners to large parties. With GRA's catering operations providing 70% of the company's revenue, it is imperative that stadium managers have complete up to the minute access to call centre booking information so that they can decide on table layout and know exactly how many of each item on the menu will be required each evening.

In addition to the reservation system, company email is handled by Citrix servers located in Belle Vue. Other applications on the network are a time and attendance system for controlling the wages for 1200 staff and the accounts system, called Pegasus Opera, which manages each stadium's financial activity, located at Hall Green, Birmingham.

The geographically dispersed stadia are connected via an ADSL network. GRA is heavily dependent on the continuous availability of this network for its business.

In early 2005 GRA was finding that with so much traffic on the network, its Internet usage was taxing the available ADSL bandwidth to an extent that it was starting to cause operational difficulties. With proposals for further network applications in the pipeline the situation looked odds-on to get a lot worse. GRA along with their systems integrator, Concorde Informatics, recognised that the time had come to act.

As GRA's technology consultants since 2000 Concorde has effectively taken on the role of the IT department for the organisation. When technology needs arise, Mike Kelly, HR Manager at GRA, consults Concorde and reviews recommended options according to price and the potential for added value to the business.

"We asked Concorde to help us find a reliable, secure and cost effective way to meet our bandwidth requirements," said Mike Kelly. The solution involved adding an extra ADSL line at each site, routed through a SonicWALL Unified Threat Management (UTM) appliance. Extra ADSL lines were installed at all 6 sites while SonicWALL PRO2040 appliances were located in the core communication hubs at Belle Vue and Hall Green. Concorde upgraded from the SonicWALL Generation 3 to the PRO2040 with content

filtering and Gateway Security Suite including intrusion prevention. It has also subsequently sold the SSL-VPN 2000 add-on.

The new SonicWALL devices have the ability to monitor Internet activity on a per user basis and restrict the sites that employees can access. Concorde recommended that GRA monitor Internet activity to ensure that bandwidth is utilised for work applications rather than taken up by casual surfing. With this enhanced ability, the SonicWALL appliances allow GRA to make the best use of their increased bandwidth.

“We now have the bandwidth to allow our core systems to run at optimum speed and security at all times,” said Mike Kelly. “We also have sufficient bandwidth to further develop the network with new applications. Productivity has greatly increased allowing us to focus on developing our core business of finding ways to enhance the overall greyhound racing experience for our customers.”

The Challenge:

Resolve bandwidth issues affecting mission-critical network applications and create opportunity for further network development.

The SonicWALL Solution:

Additional ADSL lines have been installed at six sites terminating at a SonicWALL PRO 2040 Unified Threat Management appliance at head office to provide secure communications across a geographically dispersed network.

The Results:

SonicWALL Unified Threat Management appliances were able to deliver increased efficiency and productivity of security practices along with further savings in the number of broadband internet connections and obsolete security applications.

“We now have the bandwidth to allow our core systems to run at optimum, speed and security at all times.”

Mike Kelly

HR Manager

Greyhound Racing Association

Key SonicWALL Benefits:

Unified Threat Management:

The SonicWALL family of Internet security appliances uses the latest Unified Threat Management techniques such as intrusion prevention, content filtering and gateway anti-virus to provide comprehensive protection against today’s blended threats

Flexibility:

Built-in flexibility means SonicWALL solutions may be easily customised to meet the different needs of networks with multiple broadband connections.

Ease of Deployment:

SonicWALL security solutions make the complex simple; the expensive affordable and make customers feel safe and in control.

Remote Management:

SonicWALL firewalls are designed to be capable of being managed remotely. Satellite units may be managed from a central office via the VPN tunnel itself or from a single central console using SonicWALL’s Global Management System.