Cello x The Salvation Army
Case Study

November 2024

Company Background

The Salvation Army New Zealand is part of the renowned global Christian charitable organisation and church that has fought poverty, social and spiritual distress in New Zealand since 1883.

The Salvation Army (TSA) provides a wide range of social and community services across New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, helping more than 150,000 people in need each year. Just like the broader organisation, TSA NZworks to support vulnerable populations, focusing on issues such as poverty, addiction, housing and emergency relief. Their centres typically fall into several categories, including: Community Ministries, rehabilitation services, addiction services, Family Stores, housing, youth services, food banks and disaster relief.

From Connectivity Challenges to Seamless Solutions:
How Cello Became Salvation Army New Zealand's Go-To Partner

THE CASE STUDY

TSA embarked on a journey to positively transform their connectivity after experiencing recurring outages on a networking system controlled by three external suppliers. Having gone through the process multiple times, it became apparent to TSA's IT team, led by Mark Bennett, Director Information and Digital Technology, that there was a need for a consolidated approach and not only an end-to-end supplier but a specialised networking partner.

The Challenge

TSA faced several connectivity issues stemming from a fragmented network. Their system was supported by various third-party vendors looking after wireless solutions, Internet services, cabling and connectivity services. The services were disjointed and resulted in frequent network outages, long response times for issue resolution, and a lack of clear ownership over problems.

Leadership and centre staff also voiced concerns that connectivity and performance were noticeably better when they were forced to work from home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even two years later, many were still choosing to WFH during important meetings to ensure a reliable experience. TSA's Chief Secretary expressed this as a major challenge that needed addressing.

Out of the TSA's 250+ New Zealand sites, only 100 had a preferred networking solution in place, but even that was outdated. The legacy system, over eight years old, suffered from throughput issues due to undersized devices that had been chosen for cost reasons. As TSA included operations in Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa, it became evident that a unified, scalable solution was urgently needed

TSA's diverse network environment required a solution that could interoperate easily with their existing systems, avoiding potential compatibility issues.

Cello.

> When Cello was approached with the challenge of providing a reliable and scalable LAN solution for TSA's 250+ sites across New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, we knew we needed a partner that could meet these unique requirements head-on. HPE Aruba Networking's technology quickly emerged as the perfect match, aligning seamlessly with TSA's priorities

- Antony Bell, Business Development Manager, Cello
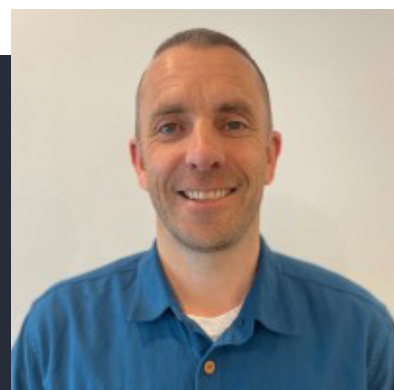
HPE Aruba Networking's Access Points (APs) and switches work in perfect harmony, allowing Cello to reduce complexity and ensure optimal performance. This gave Cello confidence that TSA's network would remain efficient and manageable across its many locations.

THE SOLUTION:
A Partnership with Cello

In the search for a new supplier, Mark and his team chose Cello for several key reasons. Cello's Network Operations Centre provided real-time visibility across the entire network, which was essential for proactively identifying and addressing issues before they became disruptions. Additionally, Cello was able to offer a personalised, hands-on approach and worked closely with TSA to customise solutions for each site, ensuring cost efficiency without compromising service.

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> My team and I agreed it was not acceptable for staff to experience better connectivity at home than in the office, highlighting the need for a comprehensive solution. Cello quickly understood the varying needs and use cases of our locations. Some required full coverage, while others could function with minimal setups. This flexibility allowed us to prioritise where connectivity was most critical, ensuring we remained within budget while still meeting operational needs.
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> **- Mark Bennett, Digital and Information Technology Director, Salvation Army**

The network needed to handle both current demands and future increases in traffic. HPE Aruba Networking's Wi-Fi 6 enabled APs and scalable switches allowed us to deploy a network capable of evolving alongside TSA. As needs expand, additional APs or switches can integrate without significant infrastructure changes, ensuring the TSA's network stays responsive and relevant.

Cello's commitment to supporting TSA's operations in the Pacific Islands, particularly in Fiji, where other suppliers had fallen short, further strengthened the partnership. Cello was willing to creatively engage with the TSA's unique challenges and provide tailored solutions that aligned with the organisation's goals.

Managing hundreds of geographically dispersed sites presented a considerable operational challenge. TSA needed a network solution that allowed for efficient, centralised control.

HPE Aruba Networking's cloud-based management solution played a key role in enabling Cello's NOC team to monitor and proactively manage TSA's dispersed sites and network across New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. The setup helped Cello identify and address potential issues early on, ensuring TSA's network remained robust and uninterrupted. The visibility provided by the solution enabled Cello to proactively resolve issues and address capacity concerns at speed.

Collaboration & Execution

From the outset, the project's objective was to unify TSA's fragmented systems into one cohesive network. Cello's team immersed themselves in the operations of the TSA's diverse centres, visiting several locations across New Zealand to fully understand their day-to-day activities and the critical role these centres played in the community.

During these visits, it became clear that the project was not just about solving connectivity issues but about providing TSA with the tools to empower the vulnerable populations they served. There was a clear core value alignment between the two brands and their passion to do better for the community. An example was when Cello designed guest Wi-Fi access in Family Stores, allowing individuals without home Internet to use the network for essential tasks such as internet banking or reading the news. This service was delivered without interfering with other critical operations, such as point-of-sale systems.

Backing Cello throughout the project was Dicker Data, Australia and New Zealand's leading value-added IT distributor. Dicker Data's support was instrumental in ensuring the timely delivery of hardware and software licences from vendors like HPE Aruba Networking. Their assistance in managing vendor relationships and pricing allowed Cello to meet timelines and deliver on TSA's complex requirements.

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HPE Aruba Networking empowered our team to deliver high-performance, secure, scalable, and future-ready network for TSA. We were enabled to meet the TSA's connectivity needs today while preparing their network for the demands of tomorrow.

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- Antony Bell, Business Development Manager, Cello

Fine-Tuning for Unique Site Needs

Given the varied nature of TSA's locations, ranging from churches to various forms of community centres and Family Stores, it was important to ensure stable Wi-Fi coverage in various key areas, such as sound desks in churches without dropouts. Some spaces, such as rooms only used for a few hours a week, required creative solutions, including cost-effective cable runs instead of full wireless deployments.

Through close collaboration with TSA's IT team, Cello was able to audit 140 of their 250 sites across New Zealand. Together, they assessed each site's unique needs, from office spaces to community areas where public Wi-Fi access was needed. This customised approach allowed them to optimise the network design for both staff and visitors, ensuring seamless connectivity. It also allowed Cello to quickly determine SmartWAN and SmartLAN as the key solutions for the project.

Success Through Partnership

As Antony Bell, Business Development Manager at Cello emphasised, the partnership was built on transparency and proactive problem-solving. He said, " Our goal was to provide TSA with a 24/7 proactively monitored solution through our NOC, ensuring that we are aware of any outages or faults before they affect the site in question. We aim to work with The Salvation Army in full transparency, identifying and resolving issues early on, before they escalate into bigger problems".

Similarly, Mark Bennett acknowledges Cello's passion and approach and said, "Cello didn't talk to us about technical specifications, they focused on the outcomes we needed and how they were different in our churches, Family Stores and residential centres."

Conclusion

The partnership between TSA and Cello, with the support of Dicker Data, stands as a successful model of how tailored networking solutions, combined with a deep understanding of operational needs, can lead to transformative results.

By working collaboratively, Cello not only addressed the TSA's immediate connectivity challenges but also laid the groundwork for a scalable, future-proof network that empowers the organisation's ongoing mission. The project's success demonstrates the value of true partnership, where both technical expertise and a commitment to shared goals result in lasting impact.