



Success stories

Toolstation: Enabling change

Digital Space has transformed Toolstation's network and UC&C services, whilst improving their security posture, providing innovation, growth and efficiencies for the customer.

Overview

Toolstation is one of Britain's fastest growing suppliers of tools, accessories, and building supplies. Founded in 2003, providing a service based on value and convenience, with more than 500 branches across the UK. Through a multi-channel offering, Toolstation customers can order through its app, online and in-branch. Its rapid click and collect service means they can collect within five minutes of ordering. Toolstation stocks more than 25,000 products, supplying electrical, plumbing, screws, fixings, and a wide range of trade essentials and top brands to its customers.

Toolstation considers its industry-leading customer, warehousing, and supply technology systems as vital components to maintaining rapid growth and customer service.

The Challenge

Toolstation was operating an unreliable mix of services across their network and communications estate. This meant:

- There was no visibility of traffic across the 500 stores for distribution or Head Office.
- Each store had problems with network resiliency in the event of a PSTN line outage or local site failure, which could result in loss of earnings and low customer satisfaction if there was a problem.
- The former network was unmanaged meaning with any new site Toolstation's Area Manager was required to set up the network themselves, organise remote support from the Toolstation IT team and troubleshoot and manage issues. With Toolstation opening at least one site per week, this became too big of an overhead on its retail and IT teams.



The legacy network and communication system was an obstacle to the operations of the company as it affected many areas of the business internally and externally. It required immediate attention and a solution that would serve all components of the business efficiently.

With the upcoming PSTN switch off, Toolstation wanted to get ahead of the game and move to a digital unified communications platform.

Toolstation contracted Digital Space in 2020 to help the business implement a new network and help migrate the business away from its old analogue telephony solution to a more reliable and efficient cloud solution.

Providing a Connectivity Solution

As a starting point, network resilience was vital at every site to support Digital Space's install changes and reduce risk of outages, which could lead to loss of earnings and impact customer experience.

The team implemented a connectivity, security, LAN and WiFi solution across 500 sites, at Toolstation's Head Office and at its four distribution centres. To ensure a seamless experience, Digital Space also provided end-to-end management and support of Toolstation's network, router, switch and access points. In doing so, this freed up the time of the retailer's already very busy IT team, enabling them to focus on other areas of importance.

Enabling Digital in the Workhouse Centres

With Toolstation embracing new technology, there was a need for complete, uninterrupted WiFi coverage in the

distribution centres. The access points were installed and configured to provide complete warehouse coverage, greater performance and to enable voice picking for their employees so they could easily use headsets to support them in their job role.

The WiFi also supported the use of portable tablets when moving around the site and helped prepare Toolstation for their future IoT and innovation roadmap.



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Providing Security and Compliance

To support Toolstation in remaining compliant, Digital Space also implemented the Forticlient Enterprise Management Server (EMS) which provides real-time endpoint visibility through a FortiGate console. Administrators can get a comprehensive view of the whole network. Through EMS, Toolstation could ensure:

- Employees working from home were secure and compliant with the business' information security policy
- Unified endpoints
- Zero trust network access
- Advanced threat protection against exploits and advanced malware
- Simplified management and policy enforcement

The network transformation was completed in just three months, helping to optimise costs and ensure that Toolstation, its employees and its customers were benefitting from the improved, resilient network.

Providing a UC&C Solution

To Retiring its former legacy PSTN solution, Digital Space deployed Mitel's Cloud Flex platform and organised 500 SIP DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) services to be installed at all Toolstation's UK retail locations.

The new network meant that Toolstation was in a position to move to an IP based phone solution and retire its legacy telephone lines that were extremely expensive in terms of call spend and rental. Toolstation tasked Digital Space with completing the UC transformation inside six weeks to prevent additional spend. A team of five from Digital Space spent those weeks deploying the solution to all 500 stores, reaching at one point 62 stores in one day, all whilst managing the challenges that came with the country being in the Covid-19 lockdown.

The team also addressed a critical risk around single PSTN delivery through the use of a resilient SIP design. By delivering it via a managed NNI (Network to Network Interface), Toolstation was able to:

- Improve the uptime and availability of PSTN access
- Delivered effective fraud protection
- Provided future porting and number flexibility
- Rationalised and consolidated fixed line rental spend, reducing monthly operating costs

Reaping the Benefits

Digital Space achieved business and operation simplicity which enabled

simplified processes, making every part of the system extremely effective.

Toolstation was able to benefit from:

- Greater resiliency on the new network
- A future-proofed network and communications service
- Improved Wi-Fi coverage throughout the store for Toolstation's employees and customers
- Through a managed service, the Support Team were freed up to work on innovation ideas rather than having to monitor networks
- Enhanced warranty and break-fix SLAs meant that in the event of hardware failure, the site is back up online sooner so loss of earnings is significantly reduced.

By consolidating all the telephone lines from a circuit series to a single network, Toolstation is continuing to benefit from a very credible operational saving each month. This is because the additional cost for managing separate internet and telephone lines across different circuits has now disappeared.

The new UC&C solution meant that user experience was greatly improved, as the UCaaS platform unified communication and visibility across the business's core function, enabling first-time contact and resolution between customer-facing teams, distribution, and the front-line retail locations. The new platform also offered insight into their users and call analytics which had not previously been available, enabling employees to benefit from a joined-up systems approach and an easier way of working.

Moving to SIP DECT on such a large scale also improved and supported an aggressive expansion program for Toolstation and allowed Digital Space to get faults diagnosed and resolved quickly. The solution ensured:

- Rapid deployment in line with network and connectivity timelines
- Improved fault diagnosis to enable improved uptime
- Resiliency was built into the DECT solution, something previously not possible through the analogue based approach
- Enhanced network coverage allows employees to use smart devices whilst moving around the store and warehouse, without losing touch.

Creating a Successful Future

For Toolstation, its relationship with Digital Space is going from strength to strength, and in September 2021, the team won UC Deal of the Year at the UC Today Awards in recognition of the project.

With over 500 sites, its IT solutions are proving paramount to the retailer's growth

plans. With Toolstation's network and UC&C solutions being supplied by one provider, the retailer benefits from end-to-end support and one support team.

With the Toolstation IT team no longer needing to triage tickets to steer requests and incidents towards the relevant supplier, they have more time and resources to work with Digital Space on innovation projects to drive customer and employee experience and further support Toolstation's rapid growth.

IT Operations Manager Barry Lee said of the partnership:

"We appreciate the scale and complexity of the projects within the scope of communications and collaboration. Toolstation moves at a fantastic pace, and having a supplier that can keep up with us was key to a successful outcome. Digital Space provided innovation, simplicity and sound delivery practices across two significant transformation pieces; Store and Distribution network, and then Telephony. The collaboration between internal and partner teams has added more value - allowing us to concentrate on end to end services that underpin our fantastic customer proposition both in stores and online."



Digital Space delivers progressive digital solutions that enable organisations to transform at pace.

Focused on enabling change for our customers, we provide a connected, productive and secure platform to maximise data, improve workflow and accelerate growth.

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