

Australian online retail and auction company migrates e-commerce platform to AWS with Citrix SD-WAN

Grays.com increases flexibility and scalability of online business

After being divested from its parent company, Grays.com needed new low-latency, high-bandwidth links to connect its 17 branches throughout Australia to the cloud. As an online retail and auction company, it began a massive transformation by getting rid of its on-premises virtualized environment while at the same time, planning to migrate its business to the cloud and building a cloud-ready network. With warehouse locations for its inventory and offices the business has to be connected and online at all times.

A new network brought agility during COVID-19

When COVID-19 hit, customers could no longer make in-person inspections on auction items on which they had placed bids. Grays.com now uses [Citrix SD-WAN](#) to power video linkups on mobile devices like iPads. Employees can now show customers their merchandise including cars, auto parts, restaurant equipment, and more via virtual Zoom and Teams meetings.

“Our new network is cloud-based – we don’t have to worry about multiple contracts and the associated costs. We have the flexibility to scale up and down, which helps us move much more quickly. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, our traffic has doubled. Had we not built our infrastructure in AWS and used Citrix SD-WAN, I’d probably be under a lot more pressure to resolve customer buying issues,” says Ayaz Ahmed, Head of Technology at Grays.com.

Citrix SD-WAN reduced the time it took to connect, enabling the team to get connectivity to AWS and the data centers in just a couple of days. What’s more, by leveraging 4G/LTE, Grays.com now can spin up a new site in a day.

Grays.com uses AWS Transit Gateway with Citrix SD-WAN to seamlessly connect its branches to all of the AWS VPCs by handling the traffic routing.



Industry
Retail

Location
Australia

Citrix products
• [Citrix SD-WAN](#)

Key Benefits
• Grays.com increases flexibility and scalability of online business

“If we didn’t put in a best-in-class solution for the network, we wouldn’t have been successful. Without it, the changes took a long time due to issues with the legacy MPLS network. Because Citrix SD-WAN is agile enough to allow us to easily make adjustments as needed, the transition to AWS was easy,” states Gerard Buscombe, Director, Precision IT.

The network was not cloud ready

As it is a growing business and adding offices, the existing MPLS network at Grays.com made it difficult for the IT department to bring new sites onboard quickly. It was imperative to implement agile technology to survive. To spin up a new site could have taken up to six months. Before SD-WAN, the MPLS introduced latency issues to some applications. The network wasn’t able to prioritize critical traffic.

Alongside Software as a Service (SaaS) apps like M365, Grays.com runs many internally developed apps across the network that require low latency and high bandwidth including thick client apps talking to databases and chatty apps.

Citrix SD-WAN: the ideal solution

Grays.com’s IT team looked to its partner, Precision IT, for guidance in finding the right technologies to achieve cloud transformation goals. Since Grays.com already had a small footprint in AWS and was comfortable with how it operated, the organization decided AWS was to be its preferred cloud vendor. All of the infrastructure consolidation and migration had to be carefully coordinated. On advice from the partner, the Grays.com team made the decision to put the SD-WAN headend in AWS Sydney to manage and connect all the sites.

Grays.com selected Citrix SD-WAN for its flexibility, the team knew that Citrix is a stable vendor that’s been in the market for a long time. Initial discovery and design with the partner were key to planning for resiliency. The demo Precision IT gave sealed the deal.

During the seven-month transformation, Grays.com deployed the new connectivity into each site in parallel with the existing MPLS network. Precision IT then deployed SD-WAN at each site.

Once the new network was in place, it transferred the sites onto Citrix SD-WAN and connected them to AWS. The entire IT infrastructure, the back of house business systems and front-end e-commerce system on AWS, was all connected via Citrix SD-WAN.

Ahmed said, “Moving to Citrix SD-WAN went alongside the vision of moving to the cloud. Since moving into AWS, I’ve realized the benefits of the cloud. With SD-WAN, it’s just been seamless. We looked at the number of VPCs we have provisioned, and we quickly resized and were able to recoup some costs due to the flexibility of the cloud.”

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Head of Technology
Grays.com

Reduced risk of outages

Resiliency is especially important to an online business like Grays.com. One of its locations was dependent on fixed wireless links with 4G/LTE for backup. Storms are a frequent problem in that location. One in particular ripped the antenna of the fixed wireless connection off of the roof. Thanks to the new solution, the location didn't suffer an outage because of the seamless failover to 4G/LTE that Citrix SD-WAN provided.

Grays.com uses Citrix SD-WAN to do local internet breakout for M365 and voice traffic (it uses RingCentral). With Citrix SD-WAN, it can apply quality of service (QoS) to business-line apps that need priority and low latency versus less-important YouTube videos.

"My confidence in SD-WAN has just increased, every day. Every month, it just continues to grow. It has been continuously steady and only needs minimal involvement from us," says Ahmed.

Grays.com will be further embracing the cloud by going 'serverless'. Now, the company doesn't have to worry about how to scale up – this allows the team to start doing more things to grow the business such as digital marketing. "Cloud technology and Citrix SD-WAN have definitely set us up for success," concludes Ahmed.

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