

Technology supports the creative spark at Publicis Group Ireland

Advertising is one of the most notoriously competitive sectors, with major brands relying on their creative agencies to deliver fresh, unforgettable campaigns and help them get closer to customers. Publicis Group Ireland, employing more than 250 staff across three Dublin sites, differentiates itself not just in its award-winning creativity but also in how it uses technology. Its network partnership with AirSpeed Telecom has been an important part of that story.

AirSpeed provides 2 x 100 Mb per second interoffice links among Publicis's three sites and also provides the vital Internet link for the agency's headquarters: all these would be key links in the chain to facilitate remote workers.

Looking to modernise a number of its IT and telecoms processes in 2012, the company hired as its IT director Toby Wells, an industry veteran who has overseen a series of strategic infrastructure initiatives at Publicis. Most ambitious was an innovative remote working initiative, which immediately came up against a hard fact of the advertising industry: many of the

established media booking and planning applications don't play nicely with traditional VPN solutions.

"There had been attempts to get remote working going here, but we really needed something absolutely seamless," Toby recalls.

"A lot of the applications we need to use are not Web-enabled and may never be – they don't function unless they are in a traditional client/server environment, which poses a real challenge for remote working."

The flexibility imperative: people-centred working in a people-centred industry

Toby stops short of saying that working from home is an expectation among advertising and creative staff, but he says it's a service that he felt Publicis absolutely had to offer.

"We are quite a progressive company, we invest a lot in technology and in new ways to work, and we saw remote working as something we had to have, even though the legacy applications we use make that difficult," he said. "We're not a factory, we are an ideas house, and if we want to keep the best people, we need to give them flexible ways of working. People have complicated lives, and this is not a 9-to-5 business."

Working with AirSpeed, Toby outlined his plans for a remote working solution incorporating Sophos Remote Ethernet Devices (RED) and Sophos UTM; this set up would enable staff to gain direct access into the Publicis LAN, using a chain of components that would include a RED device, a home broadband router, the synchronous 100 Mb per second AirSpeed Internet link into Publicis headquarters, and the onward interoffice links provided by AirSpeed.

The architecture would make the home worker's laptop appear to be simply another node on the Publicis network, allowing access to all systems including IP telephony, as well as the legacy applications for activities like media booking and monitoring of viewing figures.

AirSpeed staff on hand to support Publicis

The remote working solution is now established, and Toby says the reliability of the AirSpeed links gives Publicis peace of mind, but it's also the hands-on support from the AirSpeed Network Operations Centre that gives him an extra layer of reassurance.

"AirSpeed has also helped us when we needed to set up a temporary comms room during a six-month renovation of our premises, and I couldn't fault the guys – they provided the temporary links quickly and were very fast at doing their piece when we were moving back in. It was a weekend changeover and they were taking calls from us at 10 and 11 o'clock at night – they were absolutely faultless."

As an organisation with a significant in-house IT capability, Publicis occasionally makes temporary changes to its internal network – events which highlight the vigilance of the AirSpeed NOC.

"If we unplug something here and forget to tell AirSpeed in advance, they're right on the phone to us telling us there's an outage in the network," he says. "And whenever we have issues on the network side, they are always resolved really quickly – it's always AirSpeed that's first on the phone letting us know, rather than the other way around. That's the kind of relationship you want with your network provider."

Publicis Group Ireland overview

Award-winning Irish creative agency, part of the multinational advertising group Publicis Groupe Worldwide.

The Need

- Connectivity and proactive network oversight to support in-house Publicis IT team. Major strategic IT initiatives are ongoing, including innovative remote-working project

The Solution

- 100 Mbps licensed wireless Internet link for Publicis Dublin headquarters
- 2 x 100 Mbps licensed wireless links to connect headquarters with two further Publicis sites in Dublin
- Proactive, 24/7 network monitoring and management by AirSpeed Network Operations Centre
- Flexible services to support Publicis requirements, including temporary 100Mbps connectivity during renovation of premises

The Benefits

- Peace of mind from proactive technology partnership with AirSpeed
- 100% reliability in connectivity to support new remote working capability and vital line-of-business applications