

# Empowered IT Decision-Making in Front Line



## Cisco Transformative Networking releases real potential of technology at Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire Services

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Customer Name:** Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services

**Industry:** Public Sector

**Location:** United Kingdom

**Number of Employees:**  
800 Cambridgeshire and 750 Bedfordshire

#### Challenge

- Reduce costs while improving operational efficiency
- Achieve better business outcomes from IT investments

#### Solution

- Transformative Networking practice run by Cisco

#### Results

- Strategic roadmap aligned IT with business goals
- Targeted investment is improving efficiency

### Challenge

Fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom are increasingly reliant on IT for tasks that range from supporting mobile workers and delivering training to compiling government statistics. Poor IT performance can thus have a significant impact on operational efficiency. The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service experienced this problem when their ageing IT infrastructures needed replacing.

In both Services, for example, the network was so slow that it could take up to 20 minutes to log in. Such delays were particularly frustrating for retained fire fighters. These workers have only two hours a week available, during drill nights, to use IT systems for essential training and administration. Regular officers travelling between sites also encountered the issue. Meanwhile, for both Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, low IT service levels were affecting morale as well as productivity.

“We were struggling to fulfil users’ expectations of basic IT services, so we couldn’t hope to meet the demand for capabilities such as employees using their own smartphones at work,” says Mark Dix, ICT shared services manager for Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services. “IT had become a hot topic, and we were being left behind.”

The two organisations decided to achieve economies of scale by installing a shared IT infrastructure. However, once the decision was made to start with new servers, the organisations realised that help was needed before proceeding further. “It’s difficult for us to have all the right skills in-house because our IT teams are relatively small,” says Dix. “Because we were considering several technologies, we had to determine when to introduce them and how to assess their impact on the rest of the infrastructure.”



**“Cisco understood what we were trying to achieve and were really responsive. If you asked me to rate them in terms of my satisfaction, I would unquestionably give them full marks.”**

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Mark Dix  
ICT Shared Services Manager  
Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire  
and Rescue Services

The overall desire was to introduce more flexible working and to cut costs in line with government austerity measures. A virtualised desktop infrastructure (VDI) could potentially make savings and improve the user experience, while video was the preferred method for training fire fighters, who learn best from visual techniques.

### Solution

Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services were already engaged with Cisco at a senior level. “We wanted a well-known and trusted name to give us impartial advice, particularly in the VDI area,” says Dix, “and with its core networking expertise and experience of VDI solutions, Cisco was the natural choice.”

When Cisco explained Transformative Networking, which helps organisations align business requirements and IT planning, the concept looked like the ideal solution, and a joint programme was launched.

First, employees from all areas and levels of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services attended a one-day workshop. A Cisco team ran the session, listening as people explained what they wanted from IT and why, and asking its own questions in response.

Next, information from the workshop was used to create an architectural roadmap for IT planning across the next three years and beyond. The roadmap was based on business priorities, grouped under four logical headings:

- People
- Operational excellence
- Community safety excellence
- Value for money

The roadmap also included a business impact comparison, showing which technologies would be the least complex to install and deliver the greatest business impact. Finally, a timeline reflecting all the relevant issues provided a cohesive plan of action.

That timeline starts with a foundation, based on Cisco® Borderless Network Architecture, designed to support the changing needs of a 24-hour fire and rescue service operation. Proposed future deployments included VDI, wireless and security solutions, unified communications, and extensive video capabilities, all of which would enable more flexible and efficient working.

The shared services team for Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services worked with Cisco to validate the content of the roadmap before adopting it as their strategic IT plan. “We’re using the roadmap to help us decide on the order of importance and implementation of the different systems, taking into account their technical interdependencies as well as their relevance to our business,” says Dix, “which is exactly what we needed to move forward.”

### Results

Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services began by implementing new local area networks alongside a high-speed replacement wide area network. Operational efficiency has already improved in many areas, including IT, which has become more proactive, because engineers now spend less time on basic problem solving. Plans are also in place to extend IT support beyond the current schedule of 09.00 to 17.00 to provide assistance for retained and whole-time fire fighters who need to use IT systems outside office hours.



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ICT Shared Services Manager  
Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire  
and Rescue Services

Shared IT services are generating economies of scale, a trend that will continue and accelerate with the introduction of each new technology. “There will be significant cost savings in the next three to four years, along with other benefits such as greater flexibility, higher productivity and increased employee satisfaction. We have to invest now in order to achieve all that,” says Dix.

Involving people from all parts of the organisation in the Transformative Networking process has improved employees’ understanding of IT. This involvement makes it much easier for IT teams to communicate with their business colleagues, and has been a significant help in facilitating the funding of IT projects.

“Understanding our business needs before thinking about the IT implications has been a key driver of positive change,” says Dix. “This has enabled us to let the business start making decisions, and we’re now totally confident that those decisions are the right ones.”

As a result, IT planning is more dynamic and focused than before. While replacing critical foundation infrastructure, for example, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire are simultaneously preparing for more innovative future deployments. One of their first decisions was to design a VDI pilot, with a view to fully implementing VDI as soon as possible. The aim is to reduce desktop maintenance costs, create a more energy-efficient operation and provide an attractive working environment for young recruits.

Cisco helped with the local area network design and the VDI pilot, and continues to provide assistance and expertise as needed. The Cisco team’s knowledge and experience, combined with a process based on the open group architecture framework (TOGAF) industry standard, have been invaluable.

“Cisco understood what we were trying to achieve and were really responsive,” says Dix. “If you asked me to rate them in terms of my satisfaction, I would unquestionably give them full marks.”

### For More Information

To find out more about how Cisco Transformative Networking can help you align business vision and technology planning please visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/UK/solutions/borderless/iblm/index.html>

For more information on Cisco Borderless Networks architecture please go to:

[www.cisco.com/go/borderless](http://www.cisco.com/go/borderless)

### Solution List

- Transformative Networking practice run by Cisco



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