

UNIQLO

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Mark Bulmer UNIQLO

When UNIQLO, Japan's leading retailer of casual clothing entered the UK market it projected a new message of freedom and individualism – empowering individuals to develop their own sense of style with a wide range of well made logo-free casual basics at prices everyone can afford. It's a pragmatic approach that embodies the UNIQLO culture and an expectation it places squarely upon its suppliers.

UNIQLO is a hands on business says, Mark Bulmer (Title Title Title Title at UNIQLO), you have to run with a range of issues, in my case from Human Resources and Training to IT and Telecoms and you have to see it through. We're not interested in what suppliers say they will do but in what they actually achieve for us. We need suppliers that can rise to the challenge – take the issue by the scruff of the neck and sort it.”

It's cultural rather than contractual, because there isn't a contract that says – ‘and everything else that I've not thought of!’ But, essentially, that's how the agreement works with TFMNetworks. We expect TFM to find new and innovative ways of solving problems, not just recite the service levels in the contract and that's a challenge that they've managed to sustain from the start.”

TFMNetworks were introduced to UNIQLO at a time of consolidation. Having deployed the first phase of stores in the south east of England UNIQLO realised that their network cost base, of ISDN links to stores and an international leased line to Japan, was not sustainable.



“We didn't have a brief as such,” recalls Mark, “we just asked TFMNetworks to design a solution that would reduce costs overall and give us greater certainty with regard to variable call charges. The MPLS IP VPN solution was exactly what we were looking for. The broadband access circuits gave us a saving of well over 30% whilst doubling the throughput of



existing ISDN lines and because there are no call charges we now have a complete understanding of our costs."

Since then the relationship has become increasingly interactive and informal as TFM has become an integral part of the UNIQLO team. "It's a very pragmatic relationship" says TFM System Engineer, Simon Aston. "Our objective is to look beneath the surface and view issues from UNIQLO's perspective and



because we now know them well we can be increasingly pro-active and intuitive in our actions and recommendations. You won't find it in an SLA or contract but it works extremely well. The sequential approach to problem solving, set out in the contracts and SLAs, is very effective at measuring the quantity of service delivered but next to useless in identifying the quality of each interaction. The interactive approach means that we can get to the right answer sooner and that's good for us and UNIQLO - and of course it means that the SLAs look after themselves."

It's certainly an approach that suits UNIQLO. "We don't have the time and resources to manage our suppliers minute by minute" reiterates Mark. "The nature of the relationship we have with Simon and the rest of the team means that TFMNetworks act as extension of UNIQLO. That makes all the difference because they spend more on getting it right and less time justifying why they haven't.

TFMNetworks' MPLS IP VPN solution saved well over 30% whilst doubling network throughput

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