

Better service at reduced cost

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Mark Sutton
Director of IT
Mothercare Group



Mothercare improves service and saves money by consolidating its in-store solutions and networked IT services with BT

Client

Mothercare has been a leading retailer of products for mothers-to-be, babies, and young children, for nearly 50 years. Today, Mothercare Group has two iconic brands with global appeal: the Early Learning Centre and Mothercare itself. As well as some 400 stores in the UK, the group has a thriving direct channel comprising catalogue and internet-based sales, and franchises and joint ventures in over 50 countries.

Challenge

When Mothercare decided to update in-store point of sale systems it chose a managed environment based on a store automation application suite from BT Expedite – the specialist retail solutions division of BT. Encompassing all in-store processes from tills through to the back office, the BT Expedite solution also enabled full integration with head office systems. Four years on that decision has stood the test of time, as Mark Sutton, Director of IT at Mothercare, underlines:

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Over the years, Mothercare has extended its BT Expedite solution to create a multi-channel environment. Now alongside BT Expedite Store 6, Sales Analytics and CRM applications, it uses applications such as Sales Audit, Loss Prevention, and Customer Liability, the applications that runs its gift card product. Meanwhile, Virtual View and Learn – a centrally administered in-store e-learning tool – offers staff training and real time access to product and process information.

Although BT provided Mothercare with most of its retail applications its support and sourcing arrangements for hardware and other communications services were quite fragmented. “Consolidating that estate with one service provider would help us to achieve a better price point for those services and enable far more consistent service delivery,” says Mark Sutton.

The BT differentiators

- One-stop-shop for network connectivity and in-store solutions featuring fully integrated service management
- Industry leading proven multi-channel retail solution capable of deployment on a global scale
- Responsiveness, flexibility, and competitive commercial terms
- Proactive and collaborative approach, for example in bringing innovative ideas to the table

Case study

Mothercare

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Solution

Mothercare began by extending its contract with BT to a one-stop-shop for all support services for its in-store infrastructure. Under the terms of that contract, BT operates a helpdesk and service management function. It takes all incident reports from Mothercare and hardware incidents for Early Learning Centre stores, diagnoses the problem, and then engages the appropriate service agent for rapid resolution.

That fully managed store environment extends to the support of all software and hardware for Mothercare and hardware such as point of sale terminals, Chip & Pin card readers, barcode scanners, and store servers for Early Learning Centre. BT operates under a stringent service level agreement. This includes a seven-day four-hour fix for in-store customer service affecting problems during business hours. BT also keeps a dedicated client manager at the Mothercare main site during the week to conduct proactive and preventative maintenance and support work.

BT provides in addition the broadband network connecting each Mothercare and Early Learning Centre store, as well as a high bandwidth MPLS-based WAN linking its main offices with primary and secondary data centres. A more recent transition was the decision to move international MPLS services from other operators to BT. The BT global MPLS network now connects the Mothercare sourcing hub in Singapore, as well as its operations in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Connectivity to Bangalore has recently been approved.

The transitional benefits have not stopped there. Mark Sutton explains: “A year ago we decided to move all our calls and lines to BT. We had quite a diverse mix and, by consolidating telephony services with BT, we have both improved service and made significant savings against our previous fixed line expenditure.”

Finally, Mothercare added mobile services to its BT contract. “Actually, BT secured the mobile services after tabling a very comprehensive proposal and then competing in an online auction,” Mark recalls. “BT won it on merit by offering the best value, with a more comprehensive and proactive service package.”

Value

Consolidating its services with BT has rationalised the Mothercare supplier base, enabling it to derive significant benefit from its total purchasing power, while delivering better value. “Lines of responsibility have been simplified.

With BT wholly responsible there is no opportunity for conflict among different suppliers,” observes Mark Sutton. “Cost savings go straight to the bottom line. For example, we have almost halved our mobile communications bill, and we’re spending far less effort on administration.”

Those reduced administration costs have been helped by BT OneBillPlus, the BT consolidated billing service. Mothercare is also now using BT Billing Analyst – an inclusive PC-based application that allows detailed analysis of billing data, and the automated creation of both standard and bespoke management reports.

Mark Sutton concludes: “For us it’s really important to partner with an organisation of BT’s size, scale, and capability. BT has enormous resources, a huge breadth of services, and its capabilities in terms of research and development and thought leadership are second to none. All that really helps us to respond to market challenges and evolve our business to serve our customers even better.”

With traffic levels growing all the time Mothercare is now considering migrating store connectivity from ADSL broadband to MPLS. As well as increasing bandwidth to the stores this will improve resilience by enabling automated failover, speed up transaction times for better customer service, and support additional in-store services such as video streaming. Discussions with BT have already begun.

Offices worldwide

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Core BT services

- BT Expedite Store 6, Sales Analytics, CRM, Sales Audit, Loss Prevention, Customer Liability and Virtual View and Learn applications
- BT Business Broadband ADSL
- BT MPLS
- Fixed and mobile telephony services
- BT OneBillPlus featuring BT Billing Analyst

For more information about BT’s specialist retail services visit www.btexpedite.com, contact your BT account manager, or call 0870 8506880

