

Retail Apparel Group lays the foundation for innovation with a dynamic store network upgrade

A complete network and security upgrade across Australia and New Zealand prepares leading clothing retailer for the future



Retail Apparel Group (RAG) is one of Australia's leading clothing retailers with more than 500 stores throughout Australia and New Zealand. Looking to accelerate its in-store digital transformation and customer experience initiatives, RAG needed to upgrade its store networks and communications infrastructure.

Nexon deployed a secure managed voice and data network based on Cisco and Cisco Meraki technologies and managed the transition of RAG's stores to the nbn™ network. The majority of stores were cutover in nine weeks just before the peak Christmas trading period, with the remaining stores completed by the end of January 2020. The result is a fully redundant, high-performing, and secure environment that has introduced in-store Wi-Fi, new switching and IP telephony which provides RAG with the platform for further innovation both in its stores and across the wider organisation. Nexon is providing managed network and security services to ensure peace of mind and continuity of connectivity under a three-year contract.

The situation

RAG is one of Australia's leading clothing retailers and is the home of well-known brands such as Tarocash, yd., Connor, Johnny Bigg, and Rockwear. The retailer operates more than 500 stores across Australia and New Zealand and offers online shopping via separately branded e-commerce sites. RAG's success is a testament to its core values and culture: outstanding customer service; integrity and openness in its business dealings; accessibility; and an undying team spirit. RAG has experienced consistent growth ahead of industry averages since the group was formed in 2007, a testament to RAG's commitment to continual improvement and leading the way in product, retail, innovation and technology.

With RAG's managed network services contract approaching expiration, the group issued an RFP for a complete store and head office network overhaul, communications and security refresh across Australia and New Zealand, and managed services to support the new environment.

"A highly available network is critical for us. As a retailer, with new forms of 'Buy now and Pay Later' payment options which are popular with shoppers, you can't afford to be offline for a minute during trading hours," said Silvana Schippke, Head of IT, Retail Apparel Group.

The Solution

Fully managed secure network across Australia and New Zealand

Nexon was awarded the network upgrade project and managed network services contract after proposing a centralised and standardised solution covering all Australian and New Zealand stores. That solution included: a Cisco core network, Cisco Meraki switches with 4G backup for store connectivity and Cisco Meraki access points for in-store Wi-Fi; Nexon's Managed WAN and Cloud Telephony services; centralised managed firewalls and unified threat management; and a store transition plan to migrate stores from existing ADSL and PSTN services to Nexon's Business Internet services via a business nbn™ powered plan. RAG manages stores and users providing them with first level support in-house, which is then escalated to Nexon if unresolved.



At a glance

Industry

Retail

Business challenge

To upgrade, improve, standardise and manage store networking and telephony across Australia and New Zealand.

Solution

- **Store:** A managed secure and highly redundant network based on Cisco and Cisco Meraki, cloud telephony, new switching, access points and migration to the nbn™ access network.
- **Corporate office:** New redundant core switching, primary backup and centralised internet network services, data centre services and cloud telephony
- **Security:** Centralised firewalls and unified threat management

Outcome

Greater efficiencies and management with consolidation of networking and telephony across ANZ, fully redundant store communications, local and responsive 24x7 management and support, standardised network and security architecture and fixed price service provisioning. Stable, secure and modern network platform for future digital transformation.

"We chose Nexon on the quality and price competitiveness of their proposed solution and the strong cultural fit at all levels with our organisation. Having on-shore support had become increasingly important to us, so Nexon's local services and support was a key factor in our decision. With stores covering Australia and New Zealand we are virtually operating 24x7, which means around the clock support and response, a good understanding of the local retail space and conditions, and rapid escalation points if needed. Nexon provides all this," said Schippke.

With RAG approaching its busiest time of the year in the lead up to Christmas trading, Nexon was able to complete the upgrade of more than 95% of stores in just nine weeks. The remaining stores were cut over by the end of January 2020.

As part of the contract, and with RAG continuing to expand, Nexon established a standard reference store architecture and a fixed price per store for provisioning IT hardware and services. New sites are also co-termed with the existing support contract, which means renewal dates stay aligned over time regardless of changes. RAG has added 50 net new stores since contracts were signed with Nexon and adding head office cloud telephony to the agreement.

"It's given us a fixed cost for IT, which assists in managing our IT budget," said Schippke.

The Benefits

Network standardisation, consolidation and redundancy

RAG now has a simplified and standardised architecture for all stores, which has made it far more efficient to manage and secure, and to add new stores to the network. For the first time, Australian and New Zealand stores are on the same voice and data network, improving the communications, connectivity and management across both countries, reducing overall costs and simplifying and streamlining support arrangements.

For the first time, RAG has built-in network redundancy at all stores, with 4G failover services available via its in-store Cisco Meraki routers.

"In fact, having 4G failover means that our new stores can trade from day one, even if we are still waiting for the carrier to switch on our nbn™ connection," said Schippke.

Schippke also highlighted Nexon's role in managing the transition of stores to the nbn™ network. "We were going to have to manage the difficult process of nbn™ network migration ourselves. Having Nexon incorporate this as part of the network refresh project took away the pain for us."

Similarly, implementation of Wi-Fi across each of RAG's stores would have been very expensive to do in isolation. Provisioning this as part of the in-store Cisco Meraki deployment proved to be very cost-effective.

Ultimately, RAG's 'always on' connectivity is the platform for the introduction of innovation and new technologies in its stores, and further improvements to the group's IT infrastructure, including the adoption of more cloud-based and hosted services.

Future vision

In addition to planned in-store digital transformation, RAG is now in the process of upgrading its head office switching infrastructure and migrating to a cloud-based telephony solution for 200 staff. RAG is also evaluating ERP improvements and a server migration into cloud and hosted data centre services.

"Nexon has been a great team to work with. They have strong relationships with key vendors like Cisco, and a good feel for the retail industry and what we have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Through the transition process and now, Nexon has been responsive and obliging, always providing the resources when we needed them."

"Nexon has geared up our stores for the future," concluded Schippke.

About Nexon

Nexon Asia Pacific (Nexon) is an award-winning digital consulting and managed services partner for mid-market, and government organisations across Australia.



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Silvana Schippke,
Head of IT, Retail Apparel Group

We have a uniquely broad suite of solutions to service clients who require end-to-end capabilities coupled with specialist expertise in security, cloud and digital solutions.

Our end-to-end solutions help clients to solve problems, address frictions and accelerate growth. Committed to the highest standards of responsiveness, competency and transparency, Nexon is built on a unique client care model that is fuelled by continuous feedback. With over 400 staff, we employ some of the country's most experienced consultants and empowers teams to make decisions that accelerate change for client organisations.

As a certified and accredited local and state government provider, CREST and ISO-certified, Nexon partners with world-class technology vendors to deliver innovative solutions and service excellence.

We help our clients move from a position of overwhelm to empowerment, looking forward to a more agile and digital future.

To find out about Nexon, call us at **1300 800 000**, email us at **enquiries@corp.nexon.com.au**, or visit **nexon.com.au**

