



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

CISCO ENABLES EQUANT TO MEET END-USER REQUIREMENTS WITH MPLS-BASED VPN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Equant

INDUSTRY

- Service Provider

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Help customers lower cost, support multiple data application types, meet tough security and performance requirements, and provide any-to-any functionality
- Required a converged network platform built on a private backbone that could be easily managed, scalable, economical, and flexible to meet diverse requirements of its large, global customers

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco MPLS VPN solution matched Equant's vision of multiservice, international communications platform

BUSINESS VALUE

- Equant's IP VPN service is available in more than 140 countries worldwide, serving over 1300 multinational customers with over 27,000 connections
- Cost-effective, easy-to-manage network provides consistent, reliable service and rapid deployment of services

ABSTRACT

Equant, a member of the France Telecom Group, meets the diverse needs of multinational companies with the industry's most extensive portfolio of managed network and communications infrastructure services. Equant has been offering data communications services to enterprise customers for more than 50 years. With a presence in more than 220 countries and territories, Equant serves many global virtual private network (VPN) customers, each with multiple locations and complex needs.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Equant began offering basic convergence services on its Frame Relay network in 1997. While this voice over Frame Relay (VoFR) service provided basic voice and data integration, it was restricted only to the Frame Relay network, and was typically deployed in a hub-and-spoke fashion to reduce costs.

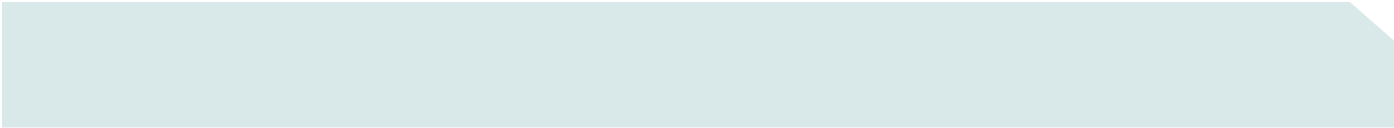
In early 1999, Equant was looking for ways to help its customers lower costs through voice and data integration, as well as support multiple data application types, meet tough security and performance requirements, and provide any-to-any functionality.

What Equant needed was a converged network platform built on a private backbone—not the public Internet. The network also needed to be easily managed, scalable, economical, and flexible enough to meet the complex and diverse WAN communications requirements of its large, global customers.

Equant's customers could have as many as five or more separate networks to manage to effectively support their voice, intranet, Internet, video, and wireless requirements. Each network had to be optimized for the specific application it would carry. The ideal solution would need to deliver separate voice and data services using a single, or converged, network infrastructure.

Equant has thousands of customers—some with more than 1000 sites each. Based on growth projections, Equant needed a platform capable of scaling to very large proportions; one that could provide global support to thousands of customers and tens of thousands of connections.

With a shared network, customers would need assurance that their traffic would be accessible only to them and no one else. The solution had to guarantee segregation of different customers' traffic on a shared, secure Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS)-based infrastructure.



Equally important, the network had to be flexible enough to support a variety of applications and implementations, such as voice, enterprise resource planning (ERP), supply-chain management, videoconferencing, and existing data applications. It also had to support quality of service (QoS) and class of service (CoS) to meet the diverse technical requirements of these various applications.

In addition, the network would have to provide high availability and manageability and deliver superior customer-service levels. Ease of provisioning, configuration, and maintenance worldwide would also be required.

Finally, the ideal solution would have to be able to support potential future applications based on multicast technology.

NETWORK SOLUTION

Equant chose the MPLS VPN solution from Cisco Systems[®] because it matched Equant's own vision of a multiservice, international communications platform. The strategy of building a single network to cost-effectively address a wide variety of customer requirements led to a joint collaboration and development effort that has resulted in the global deployment of more than 1300 IP VPN customers as of May 2004.

Unlike their competitors, Cisco[®] and Equant each have a history in data and IP networking, rather than circuit switched services. Equant considered Cisco to be a leader in the area of multiservice networking and the best-positioned vendor to supply the tools Equant needed to fulfill its strategy.

MPLS is very effective in securely segregating different customers' traffic on a shared infrastructure. Network routes can be restricted to member routers of the VPN only, enabling Equant to provide privacy and security equal to that of Layer 2 networks. This allows service providers to deliver differentiated VPN services to many enterprise customers over a converged network infrastructure, thereby reducing the complexity and cost of delivering VPN services to a diverse base of multinational businesses.

Through MPLS, Equant offers five distinct classes of service (three separate data classes, a video class, and a voice class), each designed to support particular applications. By providing transparent support for voice, video, and data applications over a shared network infrastructure, MPLS helps Equant lower costs, boost revenue, and deliver a broader range of services. At the same time, it provides productivity enhancements and reduced operational expenses for Equant's customers.

MPLS traffic engineering and QoS enable support of service-level agreements (SLAs) that are designed to meet specific needs of the applications the network carries, such as round-trip delay, data-delivery ratio, and jitter. Traffic engineering, fast reroute, and redundancy features inherent in MPLS allow Equant to plan for contingencies and manage growth. The converged network can also allocate necessary bandwidth for streaming multimedia services.

In addition to pure technology leadership, Equant has been able to capitalize on the Cisco reputation for excellence in its solutions, services, and support. These range from marketing programs available through membership in the Cisco Powered Network program to field services in all the many disparate locations that Equant needs to support its customers. Equant benefits from the services Cisco provides at every step of the product lifecycle and sales cycle.

Equant introduced its MPLS-based VPN service, known as IP-VPN, in August 1999, making it one of the world's first service providers to bring an MPLS-based offering to market.

Equant IP-VPN Service Offering

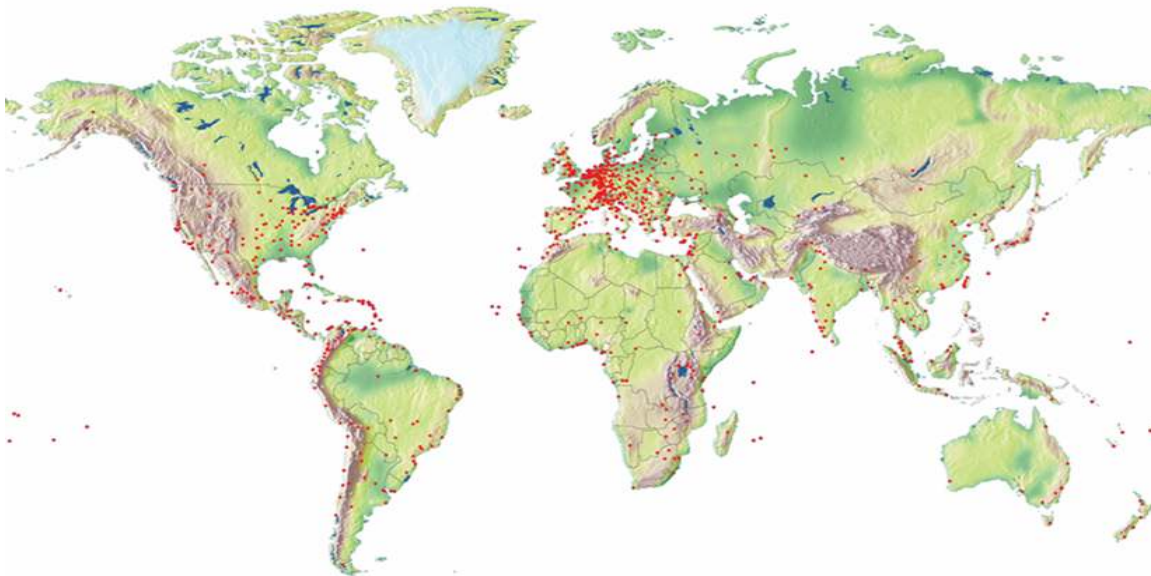
Equant's IP-VPN service provides customers with a wide range of features and capabilities including automatic, any-to-any connectivity that supports all types of applications with fixed-access speeds up to 155 Mbps and dial access up to 128 kbps. IP-VPN also offers multiple, remote-access options ranging from dial to wireless to secure IP Security (IPSec) tunneling over any broadband Internet connection. Integrated Internet access is offered with multiple levels of security.

Five classes of service support and prioritize all types of applications to protect mission-critical or real-time applications as well as provide the quality and bandwidth required for each type of application. At the same time, the shared IP-VPN network transports multiple customers' traffic securely and cost effectively without using the public Internet or requiring multiple security techniques such as IPSec. The result is an economical network capable of supporting the traffic of many customers.

IP-VPN offers industry-leading SLAs, Web-based network monitoring and reporting, and highly trained human resources who collectively speak more than 30 languages to support customer networks. Multiple contingency options are available to match the criticality of the site or application with the best-suited technical solution. Flexible routing options allow any-to-any, community-of-interest, or point-to-point emulation and hybrid VPNs, providing the best-fit technology to business locations based on need.

A variety of optional value-added IP-VPN services such as managed messaging, application performance analysis, fulfillment, and maintenance maximize customer return on investment (ROI), while professional services help customers design, plan, and manage their infrastructure.

Figure 1
Equant Global MPLS Network—Points of Presence



BUSINESS VALUE

Today, Equant's IP-VPN service is available in more than 140 countries worldwide, serving more than 1300 multinational customers with over 27,000 total connections. The cost-effective, easy-to-manage network provides consistent, reliable service and rapid deployment of new offerings.

RCL

As one of the leading feeder and container shipping operators in Asia Pacific, Regional Container Lines (RCL) covers more than 70 destinations in Asia, Australia, and the Middle East. It currently owns and operates 36 container vessels and has increasingly expanded its business in Asia by providing reliable, fixed-day sailing and fast transit time for customers.

With nearly 40 agencies operating in various countries, RCL relies on its network to provide frequent sailing and cargo information updates. These updates provide the agencies with timely information to support bill of lading processing and other cargo-related services as required by RCL customers.

As business requirements grew, the existing Frame Relay network became less flexible. In early 2003, RCL decided to upgrade to MPLS-based IP-VPN to support the business expansion needs. The new network offered RCL significant cost savings, increased communications efficiencies, as well as the following benefits:

- Improved voice quality and simplified call routing
- Better bandwidth management with built-in QoS
- Reliable technology that supports cost-effective convergence solutions

"For RCL, the upgrade to Equant's IP-VPN represents a better ability to service customers with a more flexible, cost-effective IT and communications infrastructure," said Margaret Lau, senior vice president of Group IT, RCL.

ABOUT EQUANT

Equant is a recognized industry leader in global data and IP network and integration services for multinational businesses. The Equant network has unmatched reach, connecting key business centers in 220 countries and territories, with local support in more than 165 countries. Building on more than 50 years of experience in data communications, Equant serves thousands of the world's top companies with the industry's most extensive portfolio of managed network services. These include the market-leading IP-VPN used by more than 1300 global businesses as of May 2004. Equant, a subsidiary of France Telecom, was named Best Global Carrier 2003 and Best Managed Service 2003 at the World Communication Awards and consistently leads industry surveys in corporate user satisfaction.

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