Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC Selects InfiNet Wireless for its High Bandwidth Connectivity

About Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC. With its history dating back to 1968, Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC (Muscat Pharmacy) was the first pharmacy to be established in the Sultanate of Oman. Via its 65 outlets spread across the Sultanate, the Company is engaged in import, distribution, wholesale and retail of drugs and pharmaceutical products as well as medical and laboratory equipment, veterinary medicine, surgical goods, and various consumer products.

Legacy networks unable to support business requirements. Seamless communication and real-time access to data are generally the lifeblood for any distribution business. Given its extensive network of over 200+ global suppliers and 69 outlets country-wide, this is particularly true for Muscat Pharmacy. Each day, employees from sales, supply chain management, warehousing, shipping and finance rely on business-critical applications to take decisions that have a direct impact on the company's bottom line and overall performance objectives.

The ability for employees to have real-time access to data and associated services, hinges on the availability of a reliable and always-on network. While this might not seem like a daunting challenge for most businesses, the issue facing the Muscat Pharmacy IT team was that all employees were spread across four remote facilities (headquarters and three satellite offices).

Speaking about the previous infrastructure, Ajith Kumar, Network & Security Administrator at Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC, said, "Given the distance between our four locations, a cabled solution was definitely not an option for us to consider. We initially relied on a local service provider, with the added benefits of our own Virtual Private Network (VPN), to provide connectivity to all our employees, wherever they were located. However, our requirements for bandwidth-hungry applications—which grew significantly over a short period of time—coupled with an increase in our employees headcount, made the cost of upgrading our legacy platform simply prohibitive. It also wasn't uncommon for us to have drops in network coverage, which was a source of frustration for our employees and customers, as well as a big drain on our limited IT resources."

"In 2007, we decided to move away from the local service provider and instead opted for a connectivity solution based on Free Space Optic (FSO) technology. While this new platform managed, in general, to satisfy our operational requirements at the time, we experienced many unpredictable connectivity issues related in part to such a technology requiring a clear line of sight (LOS) for its optimal performance. We decided to search for a more modern and alternative technology solution in 2015, just before the warranty of our links expired," added Ajith.

Challenges:
- Reliable, high-capacity network to enable reliable communications between HQ and three remote operational sites
- Lower total cost of ownership (TCO)
- Future-proofed digital platform to meet expansion requirements

Solutions used:
- InfiLINK XG
- InfiLINK 2x2 PRO

Benefits:
- ROI within one year of initial investment in InfiNet
- Higher employee satisfaction, productivity & improved overall company performance

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InfiNet & HTC - Strategic Partners. Having worked with Hussam Technology Company LLC (HTC), a leading ICT solutions company in the Middle East, on several other IT projects over the years, the Muscat Pharmacy IT team sought their recommendation for a viable network solution. After analyzing the business requirements of the pharmacy operations and conducting various field surveys, to take into account the local terrain between all four sites, HTC concluded that the best available option would have to be based on a high capacity wireless technology—one capable of operating seamlessly even in high interference conditions.

Based on HTC's recommendation, Muscat Pharmacy initiated a RFP process, detailing their current operational needs as well as future requirements to cater for an ever-growing business. They tested many wireless solutions sourced from multiple vendors, including InfiNet Wireless. When asked why he ultimately decided to select InfiNet, Ajith said, "With several implementations across the Middle East, InfiNet clearly has a strong reputation in the market as a quality company; so right off the bat, that gave me a degree of confidence. Secondly, from a cost-performance standpoint, InfiNet stood head and shoulders above all the other vendors. Finally, and this is what really made the decision an easy one for me, the technical support from InfiNet and HTC team was outstanding throughout the evaluation phases."

"Consider regulations as an example— if you want to connect two private buildings, that are separated by some sort of public property, as was the case for us, you need to get what is called a private link authorization from the local regulatory authority, namely the Oman TRA. HTC and InfiNet were very transparent with us from day one, guiding us through all the regulatory processes and providing us with all the necessary documents and internationally-recognized certificates to ensure that we can comply fully with all local regulations. At the end of the day, we are not only looking for a reliable solution, but we also want a partner that we can trust to work in our best interest," continued Ajith.

InfiNet — reliable, high-bandwidth, cost effective solution. Working closely with HTC, Muscat Pharmacy deployed a number of InfiNet's point-to-point (PTP) links, from the InfiLINK 2x2 family, each capable of throughputs of up to 300 Mbps. These links were complemented by the company's XG links, each capable of delivering capacities of up to 500 Mbps, and used as a backbone to connect the HQ to all three remote locations. The easy-to-install design of the InfiNet solution meant that the entire process of installation and commissioning was completed in less than a week.

With InfiNet now reliably connecting all nodes of the pharmacy's data infrastructure, Ajith is seeing a marked improvement in network performance. "We can now deliver capacities in excess of 100 Mbps, to our nearby offices, with absolutely no loss of connectivity. This means that they now have 24/7 access to applications and reports that are critical to the running of our business, which translates to higher employee satisfaction, productivity and ultimately improved overall company performance. Compared to the cost of an alternative solution from our local service provider, the new InfiNet network paid for itself within its very first year of operations! So, this is a true win-win for the business."

"After years of struggling to find a reliable, cost-effective solution, I couldn't be happier with InfiNet Wireless. I am confident that with InfiNet and HTC working closely with us, we have a true business partnership that can only grow with us, and in fact, we are already looking to expand our network and add on at least one more remote location this year," concluded Ajith.