

CASE STUDY

Metro Bank

There's more in-store for Metro Bank with FluidOne network management services

FluidOne



Metro Bank was forecasting aggressive UK growth and needed a network service provider with the reach, cultural fit and strategic IT capability to support the bank's expansion plan. Global experience and bespoke monitoring tools help to seal a deal for FluidOne, which sees the MSP novate 60+ sites to its management platform and take a lead role in the network's advancement as the bank grows to around 100 stores by 2020.

Metro Bank opened its doors in the summer of 2010, the first high street bank to premiere in the UK in over 100 years. Celebrated for its exceptional customer experience, the bank offers seven-day "in store" banking, complimented with mobile, Internet and telephony access. In 2017, it was awarded 'Most Trusted Financial Provider' at the Moneywise Customer Service Awards as well as 'Best Financial Provider' at the Evening Standard Business Awards 2017. Headquartered in London, Metro Bank employs over 3,500 staff in the UK.

Key points

- 3500 staff in the UK
- 60 sites growing to 100 by 2020
- Critical dependence on the network
- Challenge to provide connectivity in tight timescales

Metro Bank plans 40 percent increase in number of stores by 2020

Metro Bank is probably one of the fastest growing retailers in the UK today and, with a portfolio of 60 stores and plans to reach around 100 by 2020, that trend looks set to continue.

“A lot of companies say they’re changing quickly but Metro Bank really is. The growth across every dimension is incredible, with our store footprint growing 25% year on year as well as customers, colleagues and data, the amount of change in the bank really is amazing,” said John Rabbetts, director of IT infrastructure and operations at Metro Bank.

As part of its growth strategy, Metro Bank is expanding its business further west to Bristol and Cardiff and north to Birmingham and the Midlands. By 2020, the bank is targeting to reach around 100 stores nationally and 200-250 stores beyond that.

Bank wants network service provider to take a more strategic IT role

In the twenty first century, no one would be surprised to hear that information technology plays a pivotal role in business expansion and, for Metro Bank, that starts with the network infrastructure.

“The services we need from our network partner can be looked at in three separate ways – store build-outs and new office expansions, general day to day management of the underlying network that provides the IT services to the stores and back office and futureproofing the network to ensure it is cost appropriate and an enabler for the bank,” said John.

“Of course, we have IT governance of the network and we run a tight ship which means we also need to work with a supplier that can help us ensure our stores and contact centres are fully up and running, keep costs to an appropriate level and deliver new stores and buildings on time and in budget.”

FluidOne has the reach to support bank’s expansion plan

It’s just over eight years since Metro Bank opened the doors of its first store in Holborn, spreading out its store network from London and the South East.

In the last years the bank’s national expansion plans started to take shape, John could see he would need to make a change to ensure the bank futureproofed the network support and delivery capability across the length and breadth of UK.

Challenges



“We’re quite a demanding customer so we needed a partner who would react positively to our demands and have a similar “can do” attitude that we have within the bank. Ensuring our service providers match our culture is a key part of our decision process when looking at companies to help us meet our growth plans,” said John.

Cloud and an agile business model makes the MSP choice as critical as the network itself

“We have a lot of challenges internally,” said John. “With store build-outs, for example, things can change rapidly – we have a date that we have set for the opening and we have to meet that date. With the growth of the company we often need to light up another office quickly, therefore we need cabling, network connectivity and everything else quickly too. This can put a strain on any supplier but FluidOne have been able to flex with our requirements which has been a key differentiator through the first year of the contract.”

Metro Bank’s wide area network provides voice and data connectivity to all of its retail stores, back offices and data centres.

“When a customer wants information on their account or makes a call to a customer service representative, if we lose the network,

we lose the bank,” said John. “That was one of the reasons we decided to run an RFP (request for proposal). We needed to get the right partner. One that understands the criticality of the network but also has the right culture and approach to our needs.”

RFP looked for right-fit culture as well as reach and technical ability

“We were looking for someone that could provide leading class project and product management skills for the build-out of stores and back offices, give us proactive network management and support services and advise us on best practice and technology for futureproofing our infrastructure,” said John.

“What we saw with FluidOne was they were very keen to not just provide project management but also to understand the business and challenges and work out how they could meet them,” said John.

“FluidOne’s network management platform was one of the things that helped to seal the deal. We saw it and said, wouldn’t it be great if it could do this, and they said, we’ll add that functionality, within a few days they had changed the platform to meet our needs.”

Metro Bank appoints FluidOne as managed services provider

The transition to FluidOne took approximately two months to complete and was principally focused on working with the bank's existing network carrier to novate the management of the circuits and associated hardware over to FluidOne's network operation centre (NOC) in West Sussex. In total, 55 stores were novated during the project and a further four stores and one major back office, with circuits provisioned by FluidOne, have gone live since.

"Through the transition process, there were definitely teething issues but nothing material and FluidOne proactively managed the process through to completion" said John. **"FluidOne's approach is structured and well managed and they have good interaction with our project teams. On both sides, we managed to work through and come out with a successful transition. There's a definite partnership between the two companies."**

MSP's flexible work ethic takes pressure off IT admin at bank

"FluidOne has the ability to flex to our requirements and isn't rigid," said John. **"FluidOne helps us to meet our business requirements. They want us to be delighted. They know that if they give us great service, they become sticky and we'll carry on working with them because we see value."**

Something that exemplified FluidOne's customer experience ethos for John was the MSP's reaction to a moment of ambiguity at the bank.

"During the transition, we decided to remove a specific technology from the bank and then realised we couldn't," said John. **"FluidOne didn't charge us for the work they'd done, instead they came back with options for what we could do."**

Continuing on that theme he said, **"Working with FluidOne allows us to be slightly less prescriptive in our contracts – there won't be a severe penalty if we forget to add something. And the other thing with FluidOne is that everything is price listed, so there are no surprises. They're very transparent."**

FluidOne bonded 4G and monitoring tools provide bonus productivity benefits

A year on, the FluidOne-Metro Bank service partnership is in full swing and John is able to talk about how the relationship is working.

"Today, FluidOne is involved in the whole process of delivering stores," said John. **"FluidOne steers the telcos to ensure our buildings are lit, network is available with the right level of resilience and go-live."**

In event of carrier delays, Metro Bank can also take advantage of FluidOne's bonded 4G solution, which provides rapid site deployment using multi-carrier 4G SIM technology to create a resilient temporary data connection.

“We’ve tested the FluidOne bonded 4G solution as a contingency and had no issues but we haven’t had to use it in anger yet,” said John.

With the general day to day management and response to faults, John has been more than happy with FluidOne's performance.

“If there’s a problem, FluidOne is already calling us. The general response is excellent,” said John. **“They’re very good in their ability to support us across stores, even on issues outside their support remit.”**

On the customer service side, an FluidOne service relationship manager meets with the Metro Bank team on a weekly basis to work through any network issues and assist with carrier queries in areas such as billing. John has also been very happy with the performance of the FluidOne network management system (NMS).

“The NMS is a great report and management tool,” said John. **“It shows us in real-time the general health of the network but it becomes particularly important for the parts of the network FluidOne doesn’t support, like applications. For example, if we have**

an issue with capacity or availability, we can see if an application is performing differently and can provide internal trouble shooting.”

John also likes the asset management capabilities of the FluidOne NMS.

“If we have an issue out-of-hours, we can get a non-technical person to go in and FluidOne can direct the person to a fix,” said John. **“We never had this before so it’s a massive benefit to us. And as well as assets, all the cabling and lighting is recorded as well.”**



Bank views FluidOne as an extension of in-house IT department

“The greatest impact of having FluidOne onboard is their proactivity – they have become part of the Metro Bank being,” said John. **“If I phone FluidOne, I’ll get a positive response no matter what I ask. They don’t need to build a big commercial model to do this. FluidOne is partnering on the technical side.”**

As with any network, Metro Bank has experienced a couple of carrier issues over the last 12 months but John is quick to point out that none of the issues were due to poor management on FluidOne’s part. In fact, he’s extremely satisfied with both the short-term experience and the long-term prospect of working with the company.

“FluidOne has the support ability, the technical capability and the understanding of our business we need,” said John. **“They also have the reach to meet our future requirements for the next 3+ years.”**

In the future Metro Bank can expect to share in the cost benefits of FluidOne’s geographical presence and provisioning clout but for the time being most of the quantifiable benefits of the relationship are derived from the FluidOne network management system.

“We now have a window into the network,” said John. **“We’ve seen cases where bandwidth utilisation was low at stores so we’re starting to take decisions to reduce cost.”**

In addition, the bank has also noticed a reduction in the number of support tickets being raised, something John is also attributing, in part, to the FluidOne network management system.

MSP will take a lead role in future proofing Metro Bank network

“Future proofing the network, our strategy and new technology was a major part of our RFP,” said John.

Although that’s not finished yet, FluidOne is currently working with the bank’s back-end technical team to provide a cost-effective solution.

“It’s a joint effort but FluidOne is leading it,” said John. **“FluidOne is very active in helping us to see a network we can count on using into the future.”**

FluidOne

We design, deploy and manage the networks on which our customers run their businesses in an increasingly digital world. Our hybrid networks will help customers digitalise their businesses

The best price possible

Our hybrid networks, enhanced by SD-WAN, blend carriers and technologies to optimise the price of every site, and minimise installation cost with zero touch deployment. We offer transparent pricing for peace of mind.

The fastest deployment

Our hybrid networks let you choose circuits that deliver fastest for each site, and our 4G WAN circuits offer 2 day delivery with seamless transition to permanent circuits.

The easiest migration

We can phase your migrations to suit you, minimising cost and hassle.

The best performance and uptime

Our advanced monitoring shows the whole application path, raise 95% of key issues proactively and allows detailed reporting and drill-down to show issues and long-term trends.

The most enjoyable and pain free experience

Our end to end digital systems and processes deliver Right first time with clear, accurate bills.