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## New Edge brings the Midas touch to Garda USA

### Builds banking company's any-to-any MPLS network

by Sean Buckley **Wed. July 2, 2008**

Wes Colvin, CIO of cash logistics vendor Garda USA, says you'll be pleasantly surprised to learn smaller providers can deliver services that surpass what a large telco can deliver.

Garda USA, a company with more than 160 locations, decided after trialing MPLS services from a large incumbent and from New Edge Networks, that New Edge had the more optimal solution. In the following interview, Editor in Chief Sean Buckley talks to Colvin about Garda USA's transition from frame relay to MPLS.

**Telecommunications:** Although New Edge has proven itself a viable competitive carrier, what drove you to deploy them?

**Colvin:** I teach a course on telecommunications for a small college in southern California, so I try to stay close to the industry as part of my research and class preparation. I was looking for a company that could deliver, in particular, a network that would respect QoS and class of service, because we had already deployed VoIP to about 40 percent of our 160 branch locations.

We actually did the dance with a larger carrier to deploy a product that would respect the QoS bits. We're not doing toll bypass with our VoIP at this point. Part of the reason [is] because we had not been able to deploy QoS successfully on our network. I was searching for a service offering that would facilitate us doing toll

bypass, and this large incumbent carrier was not able to deliver a product for us. When I renegotiated a contract with New Edge Networks, we wrote a technology refresh clause into the contract, and the specific purpose was to deploy MPLS with any-to-any capability and deploy QoS on the network.

**Telecommunications:** New Edge touts that it bypasses the public Internet. As a company dealing with banking transactions every day, how important is it to have private network connectivity, and how has New Edge helped you achieve that goal?

**Colvin:** The majority of our customers are banks, regulated by Sarbanes-Oxley, the Federal Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banking System. They are concerned about companies they outsource business to and how they conduct business. We're a publicly held company in Canada, but because we're an outsourced vendor for public companies in the U.S., we have to be compliant [with these regulations], so it's very important that we render the same level of care as if they were doing the work themselves. The banks know computer systems break and information systems break, but they expect us to build a network and an IT infrastructure that will make those kinds of failures transparent to them.

Also, IT people like me constantly have to deal with budget issues. Every time a CFO or a comptroller hears how people are using low-cost DSL circuits for

business connectivity, they ask why we can't use the same technologies. It's a bit of a challenge to explain to a non-technical person why using the public Internet is not the best solution to solve our problems. They struggle with concepts such as SLA, mean time to repair, and public Internet threats. Also, we need a strong business partner that can understand our technology challenges, and you just don't get the same kind of attention from a telco. If you're telling them you have QoS issues on a particular WAN link, a telco doesn't get too excited if you're buying a DSL circuit for US\$195 a month.



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*"You don't have to be with one of the largest telecoms to get excellent service. Lots of competitive telecom service providers do a really great job."*

Wes Colvin, CIO of Cash Logistics,  
Garda USA

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Telecommunications: MPLS is certainly the new wave of networking. Being a business with multiple sites, what does an MPLS-based network offer in terms of applications and capabilities that you could not get with frame relay?

Colvin: Our traditional configuration was hub and spoke. We had two data centers (a primary and a secondary) and those two sites were linked. We also had virtual circuits going back from all our sites to our primary and secondary data centers. In this new configuration, we have any-to-any connectivity. That became important because we were doing things like installing digital video storage cameras. We have money rooms at many of our facilities where people proof deposits from customers going to the bank. Tellers are essentially counting money and that activity has to be done under surveillance cameras. The new technology there is IP-based and digital. We have security people in each facility, but we don't have security in each facility that watches the surveillance.

Also, there's a need from time to time for a security person in one facility to review security videos in another facility. It would have been an impossible scenario with a hub-and-spoke architecture to accommodate a lot of video traffic. The any-to-any network allows our security people to do their jobs, review those videos, and we don't need insane amounts of bandwidth to facilitate that. We also don't want to run the risk of that traffic stepping on other essential traffic on our network. The application that supports that deposit proofing activity is in our data centers and it has to be very resilient and on the express lane all the time.

Telecommunications: Garda is implementing IP telephony on this network. What benefits does it bring over traditional circuit-switched voice?

Colvin: My initial justification for IP telephony was not for toll bypass. Every time the price of long distance came down, the case for toll bypass became weaker. We never approached it from that perspective. We were in an expansion mode [and opening] 40 new branches. After looking at the cost of legacy TDM and IP hardware, the IP hardware cost less, so we made the decision to go with IP for our new sites.

We recognized the world is going in that direction and even though some quality issues [might] be a drawback in the short term we knew it would get worked out. As long as the voice quality was good enough we felt we were going to be okay. We had relatively few complaints about voice quality even early on. Even though we did not have QoS deployed on our network, we weren't taking advantage of the toll bypass capability of VoIP. We based our decision to go with IP telephony on hardware not on LD savings. That made it much simpler, organizationally, to sell. My boss and other stake holders agreed if there were issues with the technology, we would live through them as the technology matured and improved. A lot of the [touted] benefits of IP telephony—flexibility, speed of deployment, central management—have come to fruition for us and made us agile as a company deploying new sites.

Telecommunications: While you are deploying T1 and DSL as your primary modes of access, have you considered Ethernet as a WAN connection technology?

Colvin: Some interesting things are being done with network-attached storage in the enterprise architecture. We're starting to study those things and that will play a role at some point. We're not moving on it at the moment, but we're

neering a position to study how that's going to play a role in our enterprise architecture.

Telecommunications: If you were to give advice to another company of your size considering a technology migration, what would it be?

Colvin: I have discovered you don't have to be with one of the largest telcoms to get excellent service. Lots of competitive telcom service providers do a really great job. If you're a little fish in a big pond, it's difficult to get attention to run your business the way you want to. Also, I am astonished at the quality of companies like W Lange and Company and the smaller consulting companies. Their literacy and expertise, in many cases, exceeds what you can get at the largest carriers. Part of [my] advice is don't dismiss the smaller companies because [you can tap] some really great talent.

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