

On track with East Coast

East Coast works with O₂ in its commitment to enhance customer satisfaction



East Coast runs railway services on the East Coast main line between London and Scotland, travelling to stations across the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East. When its IT infrastructure contract came up for renewal, Alan Sherwen, IS Programme Manager at East Coast, knew he wanted a partner that could deliver real-time information anywhere, through a single network.

“Over the last few years we’ve undergone a shift so our employees can work remotely and have access to information regardless of the device they’re using,” he says. “Our customers are also permanently connected to the internet and they expect us to be the same – providing the information they want, when they need it.”

Complete visibility

With such geographically spread operations, one of the first things Alan wanted to do was ensure that he and his team had complete visibility over their network. Which would help them respond far more quickly to incidents and improve their overall business agility. And this would mean building an end-to-end solution with one partner. “We wanted reliability, security and innovation,” says Alan. “We also needed a partner that had experience of working in the rail industry; someone who knew about working across multiple locations in a 24/7, safety-critical environment.”

A trusted partner

The project looked to remove complexity by converging East Coast’s network: its LAN, WAN, IPT and mobile phones and rolling out SIP trunking. It also covered introducing a managed security service across the network as a whole. It required 50 fibre links to be installed at various sites, some of which were not managed by East Coast. “We had six full-time members of staff dedicated to the roll-out and our own full time project manager,” says Alan. “There was also a full time project manager from O₂ to ensure that everything went as it should. Together, they really ensured we were able to migrate all of our control systems with no issues at all.”

EAST COAST

East Coast is headquartered in York and employs over 3000 people working across a central office, five maintenance depots and more than 15 stations. Around 3.5 million customers make 19 million journeys on East Coast trains every year.

The migration has given Alan's team far more insight into what is happening across the network at any one time, in terms of better statistics and more accurate costs. Alan is also having proactive conversations with O₂ about innovations that can be made to the network and is happy that East Coast's customers are seeing far less downtime.

One single view

With the project complete, Alan feels he has the foundations to take East Coast forward. "The new technology will really allow us to improve our customer service through gaining a single view of the customer, whether they contacted us through a tweet, our website, a letter or the phone," he says. "And it's helped us improve our business continuity and disaster recovery processes."

East Coast employees are also finding it far easier to work remotely. They now have access to all applications through their mobile devices, thanks to the single, integrated system. And that also covers collaboration, with tools such as the East Coast Intranet and Disruption Portal integrated into the new system.

Always on

For Alan, the partnership with O₂ allows East Coast to stay at the forefront of a changing world. "Our customers expect to be online all day," he says. "That's why our staff who work on board our trains, or at the stations we travel to, must have the right information at the right time, especially if we need to communicate about disruptions. The new network means we can inform our passengers of what's going on, at anytime, anywhere."

You can find out more about O₂ and its partnership with East Coast on our YouTube page: youtube.com/o2ukbusiness.

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