

# Taking textiles into the twenty-first century

## CUSTOMER STATS:

- Networking IT Staff: 4
- Users: 4,000

## INDUSTRY:

- Manufacturing

## CHALLENGES:

- Install a network across the Textile Fashion Centre and link to the University, City and Museum networks
- Respect historical buildings in build-out

## PRODUCTS UTILIZED:

- Summit X670 top of rack switches
- Summit X440 series switches

## RESULTS:

- Ubiquitous access from anywhere in the city center
- Network has provided a revenue source for the real estate developer

## GOOD NETWORKING IS AS VITAL AS GOOD PLUMBING FOR URBAN BUSINESS RENEWAL – AND BORÅS CITY CHOSE EXTREME NETWORKS

### Introduction

In 1621 King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden granted a city charter to create a legal market space for peasants to sell their handicrafts in the region. A century later the city, named Borås, had 2,000 inhabitants, but its greater prosperity took off with the building of Sweden's railway network. With "trade" and "communications" already two key elements in Borås' success, it is hardly surprising that the city is now the hub of Sweden's mail order business, but that is still just a small part of the story. The Borås region now has some 1.5 million inhabitants, and over eleven thousand companies, with more than five hundred new companies appearing each year.

All over the world, national clothing and textile industries are under threat from intense global competition, notably from India and China. However, the hub of Sweden's textile industry is taking a radical stand at the top end of the market – with a focus on exclusive designs, hi-tech clothing and smart fabrics. When the opportunity arose for the city of Borås to redevelop its legacy manufacturing area, and create a state-of-the-art textile centre embracing business, university and museum facilities, it was understood that world class communications would be essential to the venture's success.

What was needed across the site was a network infrastructure as sophisticated, flexible and user friendly as every other aspect of the development – architecture, interior design, access and utilities. Product integrator Radpoint AB was selected to design and deploy a suitable network, and their suggested solution was based throughout on Extreme Networks' switches.

### Urban Renewal

The inspiration for the new textile centre came in 2006 from Kanico, a local family-owned real estate company that saw the site's potential for urban renewal, while at the same time creating a centre of excellence that would pull together the many strands of Sweden's textile industry to create a powerful unified global player.

The vision involved a Textile Fashion Centre bringing together people and organizations from design and business – a creative mix of studios, exhibition

centres, cafes and catwalks, complemented by business and technical incubators, plus the Museum of Textile History, the Nordic Textile Library and the university's School of Textiles. The scheme would attract world-class designers, design engineers, expert seamstresses, international agents, retailers and retail chains to host fashion shows, exhibitions, business meetings, seminars and trade fairs all under a single roof.

Borås, however, would not be competing purely in terms of high fashion. Its trump card would be to incorporate the university's research and development expertise in "smart fabrics" as well as hi-tech yarn for specialized applications as diverse as fire protection, medical sutures and reinforcing fibre for motor tyres.

## The Challenge

What would attract the brightest and the best from across Sweden and the world to set up shop in this "Simonsland Textile Fashion Centre?"

Borås combines the cultural richness of a big city with the convenience and closeness to nature of a small town. Then there is the incubator effect of closely integrated business, industry, university and research facilities. Then there is the need for architects and designers to create an attractive environment. But behind it all there must be the necessary infrastructure to support any number of different players – plumbing, sewage, heat, lighting, power and, of course, communications.

Radpoint AB, the product integrator, serves customers who have a need for high reliability, availability and productivity. Radpoint was chosen to design and deploy the network infrastructure across the Textile Fashion Centre and its links to the University, City and Museum networks.

The intention was to attract a large and evolving population of diverse skills and trades, from fashion designers and crafts, through academic, research and development to small hi-tech manufacturing. So an elaborate networking set-up that would require extra IT skills and training was out of the question. What was needed was a built-in infrastructure with flexibility to deliver different levels of service in an immediate, "plug and play" manner, and with plenty of potential to meet future demands.

As Kanico's COO Hanna Lassing, explains: "People come here to learn, to research, to develop new textiles and create new fashions, not to fiddle with IT networks."

In other words the challenge was to deliver performance and flexibility cloaked in simplicity, and Radpoint explored a number of options, including Cisco and Dell, before choosing Extreme Networks on the strength of their agility and resilience in face of such a diverse and open user community.

"The site offers full, redundant IT capability for our guests, tenants, students and conferences – on tap and as accessible as any power socket – as well as Wi-Fi support for visitors' and residents' mobile devices," explains Kjell Berggren, Kanico's CEO.

One additional factor was the need to respect the structure of the site's heritage architecture, as Kjell Berggren explains: "Radpoint got this right once and for all. The network is in place, everyone enjoys the service levels of their own private network, linked to their service providers of choice, but without any further need for drilling holes and re-laying cables in this heritage site."

## The Network Solution

Building work began in 2011 and by March 2013 the site was ready for laying the network as the University, City offices and the first business customers moved in. Following a couple of months of roll-out and testing, the network went live on the first of August 2013.

Interconnection between the Textile Fashion Centre and the main University and city administration sites was provided by Extreme Networks' Summit X670 series 10 Gigabit Ethernet Top of Rack switches, providing high density and low latency aggregation switching.

The Centre's shared infrastructure was based around fifty-five Summit X440 series switches. Powered by the same operating system as Extreme Networks' top of the range models, these compact and cost-effective switches deliver the same benefits to the network edge – including advanced traffic management, comprehensive and granular identity-aware security, high reliability including redundant power supplies, and SummitStack technology allowing multiple switches to form a single logical unit for easy management as new devices and mobile access points are added to the network.

The other key players liked what they were seeing in the new network and, since the network first went live, a total of over 200 Extreme Networks switches have been ordered by the Borås city administration, the University, the School of Textiles and other stakeholders keen to upgrade their own networks to similar levels of performance and functionality.

Radpoint provides one dedicated support person to assist mainly the smaller companies, while the main players like the University, City administration and bigger customers provide their own IT skills. Rollout and initial acceptance of the system has been very good, according to Hanna Lassing, and the few lockdowns experienced so far have been caused by failures in service delivery to the site, and never from the new network itself.

## Benefits Still Emerging

Borås has gained a whole new business and cultural hub, while losing a picturesque but crumbling ruin and potential safety hazard.

Sweden's textile industry has gained new strength with a hotline to the most advanced textile research and development, while hosting a creative hub to stimulate new fashion concepts and

raise global awareness of Swedish craft skills.

Small business has not only gained a fertile space for incubating tomorrow's enterprise, at Simonsland it can also enjoy better IT service at lower cost and greater convenience than it would be likely to find in the open market.

Radpoint has gained a reference site, demonstrating that the real drivers for networking business and community come from reliability, simplicity and good user experience just as much as high bandwidth and low latency. IT departments from a number of local organisations have already expressed interest in the success and value added by this network and become potential Radpoint customers. From the users' point of view, a network offering this much transparency, stability,

flexibility and ease of management almost ceases to exist as a network – it has become a ubiquitous service.

Meanwhile Kanico, who developed the site, is finding that there is nothing quite like seamless, trouble-free connectivity for not only attracting business tenants but also, more importantly, retaining them. With a single service provider connection serving any number of tenants, Kanico has also gained a whole new, on-going source of revenue.



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