



NCP

Case Study

Nooksack Tribal Gaming Agency



Two Washington casinos deploy VPN solutions to bring efficiency to remote working environments

Any time Ed Doherty had to update or compile records for the Nooksack Indian Tribe's Tribal Gaming Agency (TGA), an agent working in a remote location 35 minutes away would need to drive to Doherty at TGA headquarters, manually update files on a USB drive and then head back. It was a process that happened weekly, for eight years, long before Doherty started in his current role.

The Nooksack Indian Tribe operates two casinos in Washington – the Nooksack River Casino in Deming, Washington, which is also the TGA's headquarters, and the Nooksack Northwood Casino in Lynden, located about 20 miles to the north. By manually transporting sensitive information between these two casinos, the TGA risked providing inaccurate or out-of-date information to the co-regulators overseeing it – the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) and the State of Washington.

"We were really playing with fire by updating files that way," says Doherty, IT Manager for the TGA. "We called it the Flintstone network."

Ed Doherty, IT Manager for the TGA

The process couldn't continue. Like his predecessors, Doherty faced a number of challenges as he explored technology solutions to correct these inefficiencies: both facilities were located in rural areas and lacked full access to cost-effective broadband technology, both facilities operated somewhat independently of one another with no shared database or domains, and vendor quotes for necessary remote access infrastructure upgrades were too high.

Fortunately, Doherty remembered a technology vendor he had heard of a few years prior that he thought would help him connect the two casinos and build a seamless remote working environment for employees.

A VPN Solution to Eliminate the 'Flintstone Network'

In a previous IT position with the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Doherty had been tasked with connecting eight different tribal locations scattered across Whatcom County, stretching the 40 miles from the Canadian border to Mt. Vernon. As part of that process, Doherty worked with Juniper Networks, which recommended a VPN client from one of its partners, NCP engineering.

Years later and now in his current role, Doherty again crossed paths with Juniper. And again, Juniper endorsed NCP. Doherty saw an opportunity to deploy remote access VPN solutions to eliminate some of the operational inefficiencies that characterized his "Flintstone network."

"When I was wrestling with the decision to partner with a VPN vendor, Juniper had no other suggestions," Doherty says. "They said, 'This is the most reliable VPN solution', but I was still a bit hard-headed. But after doing my own research, it was clear Juniper was right."



The Onboarding and Support Process

After getting in contact with NCP engineering about adopting its NCP Secure Entry Client equipped with access to the Juniper VPN gateway, Doherty started working with Julian Weinberger, NCP's Director of Systems Engineering, to set up a configuration that would meet the TGA's needs.

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Ed Doherty, IT Manager for the TGA



The initial challenge for Weinberger was a familiar one for systems engineers - make the VPN as easy to use as possible for end users, while still keeping the network secure. But the TGA also had additional needs.

"The TGA required Windows pre-logon and VPN, which necessitates a single, automatic sign-on process," Weinberger says. "Additionally, multiple users needed to be able to log into the same computers. That's all a little bit tricky from a technical perspective."

After a few weeks of work, Weinberger and Doherty were able to leverage the full NCP feature range. This included multi-user support, which required Weinberger to configure the system with a pop-up window for entering user authentication credentials (username and password) each time the computer is started, or a new user starts working on it. This also enhances security by preventing user credentials from being stored as part of the configuration files and forcing users to re-enter access information for each session.

The VPN was also configured so that the credentials for Windows and VPN logon are the same. This allows users to log into their computers and automatically establish a

secure VPN connection with just one click. Sign-out is just as straight-forward - as soon as someone signs out from Windows, the VPN disconnects.

Weinberger also helped Doherty increase the standard VPN timeout setting, which is set to 100 seconds.

Having worked with difficult VPN clients before, Doherty appreciated the immediacy of the support he was provided by NCP and, specifically, Weinberger, who would always respond whenever Doherty had a question. He says that Weinberger "showed the patience of a guru" - even when answers to his questions were written or illustrated somewhere in the documentation, Doherty jokes.

Benefits

- ✓ Universal client led to a cost 10 times less than original estimate
- ✓ Adherence to compliance standards because records provided to regulators are accurate and up-to-date
- ✓ Greater efficiency from remote workers stationed in rural areas
- ✓ Secure connection between the two facilities
- ✓ Single, automatic sign-on process allows for easy access, even for multiple users logging into the same devices
- ✓ One-click user logon, and fewer technical issues, means easier administration and less IT time spent troubleshooting
- ✓ Comprehensive, immediate support from NCP engineering staff



The Benefits

The TGA has already benefited considerably from having VPNs in place.

Administration is easier. As the sole administrator of the network, Doherty doesn't have the time to be constantly troubleshooting, and NCP has helped eliminate all the after-hours questions from users about technology - a frequent occurrence following the daily 6 p.m. shift change, two hours after Doherty's own work day has already ended.

The user problems themselves are also much less frequent. Even though some of the remote users aren't very tech-savvy, the NCP VPN has made it very easy for them to authenticate to the domain in Deming, by clicking just one button. These remote users - a handful of users at the Northwood facility, as well as another who lives 45 minutes away and another who typically works after-hours - have all benefited from VPN access.

The TGA saved on costs, too. NCP's clients interoperate with any IPsec-compatible VPN gateway, making it easy to build on existing investments and averting the need to go the rip-replace route. By integrating NCP's remote access infrastructure with the Juniper Gateway that the TGA had

deployed years earlier, Doherty generated a final cost that was 10 times lower than what other vendors had quoted his predecessors for similar upgrades years earlier.

But no one has benefited more than Doherty himself, who now doesn't have to make the 35-minute trek to the Northwood location nearly as often, and who has peace of mind that everything is running smoothly, even when he isn't around.



"[My support representative] showed the patience of a guru."

Ed Doherty, IT Manager for the TGA



About NCP engineering

NCP engineering, with the most flexible VPN software in the industry, is a perfect element to a successful SASE and Zero Trust strategy implementation. NCP's solution is more than just a VPN, providing customers with rapid scalability, security, and compatibility to manage their complex private networks in an ever-changing environment. NCP gives companies the ability to be more resilient and responsive in creating, managing, and maintaining their users' network access, resulting in cost-savings, decreased network administration, increased employee productivity, and the ability to adapt policy changes on the fly.

To learn more about NCP engineering, visit www.ncp-e.com.



Do you have any questions or would you like to make an appointment for a product demonstration? Please contact us with any questions:

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We look forward to discussing how we can help you.