



edgeBOX

Case Study

Hospitality Start-up Gets Competitive Edge From Critical Links' edgeBOX™

The client

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Being a software house focused on the hotel and travel industry, GuestCentric has 20 in-house engineers working to develop their software, with locations in both Portugal and the US.

GuestCentric is leading the charge to solve one of the travel industry's biggest and most complex challenges: how can hundreds of thousands of small and medium businesses capitalize on direct customer interaction through the Internet and mobile channels.

Critical Links' edgeBOX is the "all-in-one" office solution that provides cost mitigation when deploying remote or SMB office infrastructure. These savings include: acquisition costs, communications costs, Windows licensing costs, multi-device support costs, etc...

GuestCentric exemplifies how Critical Links' edgeBOX can be used to maximize added value to a growing SMB. This small start-up company was facing budget-driven resource challenges, requiring an intelligent solution that would go beyond the technology, showing practical results on the company's balance sheet, minimising the need to recruit specialist technology staff and improving customer service.

“Critical Links’ edgeBOX allowed us to postpone the introduction of a Systems Administrator into our team for over 6 months. We used that budget to acquire resources critical to our core-business that would be otherwise spent on managing our infrastructure. The IP-PBX allowed us to communicate from scratch with US and European markets at very low cost.”

Pedro Colaço, CEO, GuestCentric

The challenge

Being a start up, GuestCentric needed to focus on its core-business while leveraging the full benefits of today’s voice and data technologies. GuestCentric is working with reduced budgets and trying to sustain growth, so an intelligent solution capable of delivering value-added services with very low TCO, CAPEX and OPEX, was required.

The solution

The edgeBOX solution deployed a range of features to enhance their productivity and to assure its voice and data network delivers the high level of performance they expect. The edgeBOX manages a LAN that comprises about 20 client laptops, running both Windows and Linux, and two redundant servers for software testing and information repository.

Being a start up, GuestCentric needed to focus on its core-business while leveraging the full benefits of today’s voice and data technologies. Just like the vast majority of start-ups, GuestCentric is working with reduced budgets and trying to sustain growth, so a solution was required that was capable of delivering value-added services, while having a very low Total Cost of Ownership(TCO). On top of that, IP-PBX features capable of supporting a small call centre and IVR were required.

GuestCentric selected the edgeBOX to consolidate its voice, data and IT infrastructure, aiming to achieve higher productivity, simplified deployment and management, and lower costs. The edgeBOX provided GuestCentric with a significant competitive advantage in a very competitive market with a fast moving “opportunity window”.

GuestCentric is now taking advantage of a range of edgeBOX features to enhance their productivity and to assure its voice and data network delivers the high level of performance they expect. Its LAN comprises about 20 client laptops, running both Windows and Linux, and two redundant servers for software testing and information repository. For voice they use 20 Linksys IP phones. The E-mail is stored on a remote server but configured to be delivered through Critical Links’ edgeBOX.

Some outstanding features of the edgeBOX solution currently deployed at GuestCentric:

Networking features (LAN + WLAN):

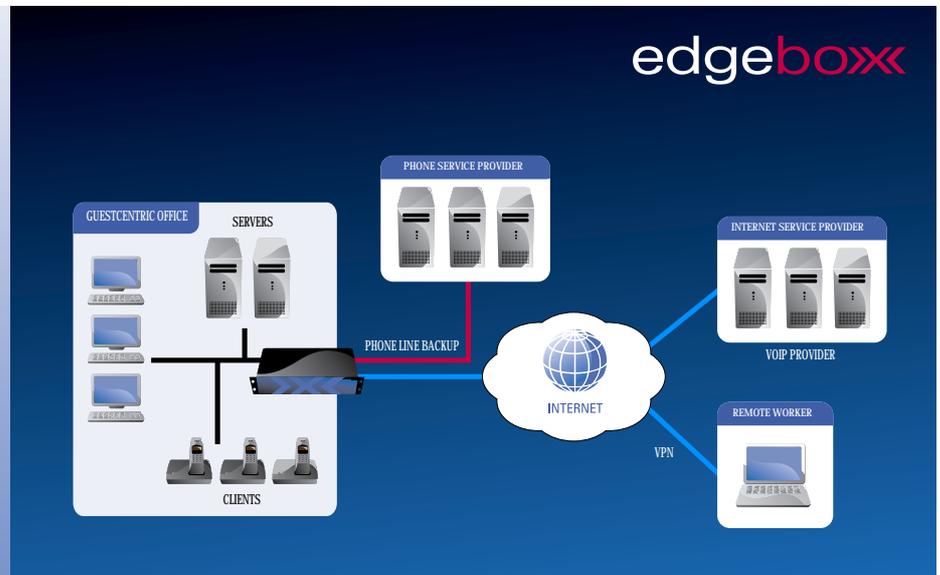
The networking features include DHCP with specified MAC-addresses, that increases the LAN and WiFi security. The WiFi network is protected with WPA Public-Shared Key, minimising security risks.

Also, the edgeBOX acts as a router with NAT capabilities between the LAN and the 3COM™ Router providing WAN connectivity. The edgeBOX transparent proxy caches known websites, allowing a significant performance increase in web-browsing and optimization in bandwidth utilization.

Security features:

The edgeBOX firewall provides content filtering, as it makes sure no dangerous websites are accessed that could jeopardise the integrity of the client laptops, causing delays and lowering productivity. The anti-virus regularly checks the shared folders to guarantee they are secure for daily usage.

GuestCentric's edgeBOX uses a VoIP provider with a backup PSTN line. Remote workers access the LAN security via the PPTP VPN.



Collaboration, Access Control and QoS features:

GuestCentric's highly qualified, mobile workers can access the LAN using the edgeBOX PPTP VPN and download e-mail securely, directly or via web browser. The shared folders are used mainly for software repositories, HR information and generally-available public folders. The establishment of quotas makes sure the edgeBOX hard-drives are not overloaded. In order to avoid data loss, hardware RAID-1 allows for full data redundancy and, in addition, a daily backup is made to an external USB drive that is kept outside the premises. GuestCentric uses a full VoIP deployment with TDM fallback as backup. Two separate VoIP providers are used, taking advantage of different rates for general outbound calls and calls to the US, one of them also providing DIDs that are then assigned to internal extensions. The QoS makes sure VoIP calls have the highest priority for inbound and outbound WAN traffic and allows a higher priority to internal virtual servers that need to regularly access the Internet for testing purposes.

The edgeBOX NAC makes sure every user is authenticated when trying to access any edgeBOX service, with different access profiles for administrators, generic users and guests.

Business Benefits

GuestCentric can now invest on resources focused on their core-business, instead of purchasing dedicated Data-IT-Voice equipment and hiring support staff. Critical Links' edgeBOX proved to be the flexible solution for their voice and data networking needs.

GuestCentric deployed edgeBOX as a flexible solution that allows them to focus their resources on growing their core-business, while solving their existing voice and data networking needs and providing access to a number of features based on collaboration, web presence and security that will be of future benefit as the organisation grows.

Critical Links' edgeBOX allowed GuestCentric to delay the admission of a Systems Administrator for six months and, even after hiring one to manage GuestCentric's specific software engineering and development infrastructure, the edgeBOX needs less than 5% of the usually required management effort. This allowed GuestCentric to have cost savings in excess of US\$ 30,000 that were redirected to expand the R&D team and hence increase investment on their core-business.

By using the edgeBOX PPTP VPN, they are saving about US\$ 180/month in operator-provided UTM services. Additional cost savings came through using VoIP and reduced tariffs, estimated in excess of US\$ 370/month. Total monthly cost savings are estimated to be around US\$ 5,500, with return-on-investment achieved during the first month. The low TCO and highly integrated technology in the edgeBOX platform allows GuestCentric to focus on their core competences and on what is strategically critical to them.



Client Profile

GuestCentric Systems (www.GuestCentric.com) is an early-stage startup that was founded in October 2006 with the mission of developing web services that revolutionize the way the hospitality industry works.

Project Profile

GuestCentric, as a start-up, needed to focus on its core-business while reaping the full benefits of today's voice and data technologies. Just like the vast majority of start-ups, GuestCentric is working with reduced budgets and trying to sustain growth, so a solution was required that was capable of delivering value-added services, while having a very low TCO.

Solution Profile

- The edgeBOX solution deployed a range of features to enhance their productivity and to assure its voice and data network delivers the high level of performance they expect.
- The edgeBOX manages a LAN that comprises about 20 client laptops, running both Windows and Linux, and two redundant servers for software testing and information repository. For voice they use 20 Linksys IP phones. The E-mail is stored on a remote server but configured to be delivered through the edgeBOX.
- The edgeBOX solution currently deployed at GuestCentric, includes Networking features (LAN + WLAN); Security features; Collaboration, Access Control and QoS features;
- The edgeBOX v4.5 solution was deployed on a edgeBOX Office Gateway based on Dell™ PowerEdge SC440 server

Business Benefits

- GuestCentric invested in resources focused on their core business, instead of purchasing Data-IT-Voice equipments and hiring support staff;
- A flexible solution that fits the existing voice and data networking needs;
 - Access to a number of features based on collaboration, web presence and security;
 - The edgeBOX required less than 5% of the estimated management effort, allowing GuestCentric to have cost savings in excess of US\$ 30,000.
 - The edgeBOX PPTP VPN, generates savings of about US\$ 180/month in operator-provided UTM services. Additional cost savings came through using VoIP and reduced tariffs, estimated in excess of US\$ 370/month. Total monthly cost savings are estimated to be around US\$ 5,500, with return-on-investment achieved during the first month.
 - The low TCO and highly integrated technology in the edgeBOX platform allows GuestCentric to focus on their core competences and on what is strategically critical to them.

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About Critical Links

Critical Links is a global provider of converged ICT solutions for Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) that dramatically simplify and cost-reduce by consolidating a host of advanced voice, data and IT applications over a single platform.

Critical Links' flagship product, the edgeBOX™, is an award winning multi-function gateway that provides VOIP, IP-PBX, VPNs, security, NAC and QoS as well as web server, e-mail server and data storage; It replaces up to 8 separate devices that would otherwise be required to support this breadth of functionality, and is available on a range of scalable and fault-tolerant platforms supporting up to 300 users. Critical Links offers its solutions through a global network of VARs, System Integrators, OEMs and Service Providers. For more information:

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