

# Local knowledge, global expertise - NTT Communications helps Cath Kidston refurbish IT core in 28 stores in Japan



“ We were clear that we wanted a provider that could offer not just ICT solutions, but go beyond that in both the UK and Japan. Project management, communication, trust and support were as important to us as IT and network capability. NTT Communications offered that complete package, which made it possible for us to grow in Japan when most of our technical people are in the UK. ”



**Karl de Bruijn, IT Director,  
Cath Kidston**

## Background

Cath Kidston is an international chain of retail stores that sells home furnishings, bags, accessories, products for children and fashion with a distinctly modern vintage aesthetic. Known for hand embroidered fabrics and brightly coloured furniture, Cath Kidston started out as a small shop in London in 1993 and now operates 230 stores in 18 countries worldwide. Its distinctly English prints are popular internationally, especially in Japan, where the company recently brought back its 28 franchised stores and refurbished them to cater for growing demand in Asia.

## Objectives

Cath Kidston wanted to connect its 28 retail stores in Japan with each other and to the headquarters in London, to enable merchandise and order data to be synchronised. It wanted a hosting solution to store its sales data and technical support services to help managers and staff in running the retail stores smoothly. With headquarters in the UK and operations in Japan, Cath Kidston wanted a provider with a strong global infrastructure.

## Challenges

Cath Kidston had to go-live on 1st September 2015 with no flexibility on this deadline as its contract with its franchise partners ended on 31st August 2015. This left only four months for NTT Communications between signing the agreement and go-live, to deliver Cath Kidston's requirements.



“Without the support of NTT Communications we wouldn't have gone live on 1st September 2015 and could have ended up being delayed by 3-4 weeks. Where possible NTT Communications came up with workarounds such as using a backup mobile telephony network to connect some of the stores that did not have a leased line, which ensured we could go live as planned.”



**Karl de Bruijn, IT Director,  
Cath Kidston**



Cath Kidston wanted the changeover of the ICT equipment to happen simultaneously across all stores on 31st August 2015. The stores would not be allowed to close for even a day. This required liaising with multiple vendors in Japan, and seamless communication between the Cath Kidston team in the UK and the NTT Communications teams in Japan and the UK.

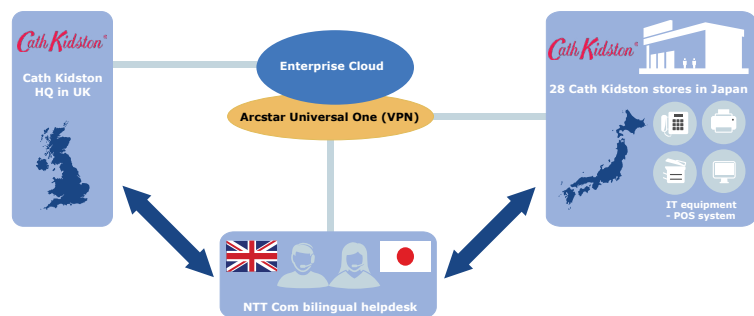
Deploying an MPLS network to connect the stores that are typically located in shopping malls required strict security compliance: each building came with its own list of security protocols which meant that there was no homogeneity in the network setup and equipment installation process.

Masaaki Moribayashi, Managing Director for NTT Europe said, “Our strong presence in Japan meant that our personnel understood and appreciated the importance of the minutiae of local rules and associated variances and adhered to them to ensure that NTT Communications met the deadline and its commitments.”

## Solution

Connectivity to the stores is delivered via the Arcstar Universal One virtual private network. The sales data from the stores is kept in the secure, private cloud solution, NTT Communications Enterprise Cloud. In each Cath Kidston retail store, NTT Communications set up IT equipment consisting of: a POS (Point of Sale) terminal, a PC, a switch, a printer, a telephone, and a router. A Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection from Japan to a Cath Kidston data center in the UK was set up to enable Cath Kidston to control the location of data.

NTT Communications established a bilingual help desk in Tokyo offering support in Japanese and English to help store personnel deal with IT issues. The IT equipment was installed simultaneously across Japan over a single night with detailed project plans and communication between teams, avoiding any store closure or loss of revenue.





“ This was a project that called for technology and people to work together. Our teams came together to deliver against a tight deadline taking into account the numerous regional rules in place in Japan. We are very happy we were able to deliver to Cath Kidston’s expectations and look forward to continue being a part of their growth story in Asia. ”



**Masaaki Moribayashi,**  
Managing Director, NTT  
Communications, Europe



## Benefit

NTT Communications worked with local vendors in Japan to source and manage IT equipment for Cath Kidston. This meant that Cath Kidston signed contracts only with NTT Communications and avoided having to sign contracts with multiple vendors in Japan.

With NTT Communications having a strong presence in the UK and Japan, project management was seamless, helping Cath Kidston to open its refurbished stores on schedule as planned.

Karl de Bruijn, IT Director, Cath Kidston, said, “We were taking back control of our franchised stores but we did not have any personnel of our own in Japan to handle the IT side of business. We needed a partner to act on our behalf and NTT Communications did exactly that. Its knowledge of the local market has been especially invaluable as, for example, NTT Communications knew the landlords of our stores and liaised with them on our behalf.”

The IT help desk provided by NTT Communications acts as a single point of contact for Cath Kidston staff in Japan to resolve ICT issues. If a third party vendor is needed to solve an issue with the equipment at the store, the help desk takes responsibility for including other parties to reach the solution. This avoids handovers in the support process.

Having established a strong ICT infrastructure with the support of NTT Communications, Cath Kidston is now looking to simplify its order management process and the templates used in it. The company plans to expand further into the Asia-Pacific region and NTT Communications is working to support that expansion.

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