

# Customer Story: How Harwoods Centralised Their Networks



**HARWOODS**  
group

## Challenges

With 26 branches throughout the South East of England, and a successful 90-year history, Harwoods Group are one of the leading prestigious car dealers in the UK.

Following an upgrade to the WAN Harwoods and PAV, in partnership, needed to address challenges around the Wireless network across the Harwoods Group. Each site was built on disparate networking equipment, lacking common configuration and any central management. This setup was taking too much time to administer and maintain, suffering increasing downtime and presenting significant security challenges.

After upgrading the WAN to a fully meshed VPLS, the next logical step was to review the wireless offering. An enterprise Wi-Fi solution was required for internal users, and to provide Harwoods' customers with secure and reliable internet access. The addition of the customer network enabled the Group to better connect their customers with offers around vehicles and services. The facility also allowed their customers to work from the dealerships, to catch up on email or surf the internet; all of which enhance the customer experience that Harwoods strive to deliver consistently and improve upon.

The goals of the project were to reduce and simplify network administration and increase security, whilst building a stable and reliable wireless network that is unified across all sites. Once the Wi-Fi project was complete, Harwoods wanted to review their local area network (LAN). The LAN suffered from the same challenges as the previous Wi-Fi network; being stand-alone, disparate, and lacking central management. Harwoods wanted a unified solution for their networking platform.

## Solution

All Harwoods sites are now covered by Meraki MR18 & MR33 wireless access points inside the buildings, and external Meraki MR66 & MR74 APs outside the buildings to extend the network into the forecourts.

The guest network enables the Group to deliver tailored information to customers as well as allowing them to check their emails and browse the internet.

With the recent introduction of "connected" cars, utilising over-the-air updates, the wireless network enables these new services for the vehicle technicians to diagnose and update customer cars without the need for the it to even enter the workshop.



There are circa 250 Meraki access points deployed across the Harwoods Group. Updates, monitoring, security, and network performance are all reliably administered via the simple to use and powerful Meraki Dashboard interface.

Continued on next page.

## Customer Story: How Harwoods Centralised Their Networks

With the wireless solution successfully deployed, Harwoods and PAV then engaged in an assessment of the LAN requirements. This review pitched the Meraki offering against another leading switch provider. A trial of the Meraki equipment was undertaken to demonstrate its value. The result was that Harwoods selected the unified Meraki solution, as it gives full visibility over their LAN, both wired and wireless, as well as meeting all other project requirements.

Harwoods require around 3,000 network ports across their sites, and because of the size and geographical spread throughout the south east of England, the switch replacement project is being rolled out in stages.

Meraki's cloud-based Software as a Service (SaaS) allows Harwoods to configure, provision and monitor their solution remotely, from a web browser or mobile device app.

Harwoods were able to utilise mid-range access switches meaning costs were competitive against the more traditional offering. This helped Harwoods to make a successful business case, despite the two components of cloud managed switching; hardware & licencing. At present, around 50% of the Harwoods estate have Cisco Meraki switches successfully installed, and the rollout is ongoing.

Harwoods also chose to adopt the new Meraki CCTV solution. Despite having managed security solutions for their sites, the IT Department had a use-case for specific monitoring of their comms rooms. Once again, the unified Meraki solution gives visibility of all cameras, through the central dashboard, allowing the Service Desk to monitor the rooms in real time, as well as record historical activity. This can be elegantly presented through the "wallboard" feature. This is being rolled out across the Group as part of a wider project to tidy and secure the network facilities at each site. There have also been some other business cases within the group where the Meraki CCTV offering has been utilised and with continual enhancements and products coming from Meraki, there may well be more in the future.

## Results

As a result of the engagement with PAV, the Harwoods Group now have fixed costs for budgeting purposes over the next 6-7 years for their network hardware licencing, which includes a lifetime warranty on equipment; another key reason supporting the business case. Any device that develops a fault gets PAVassure and Cisco's support. This is aided effectively by Cisco's hands-on approach to smaller business; with a dedicated account manager and PAV's ongoing support, the experience of dealing with Cisco Meraki has been very positive for Harwoods.

## About the customer

Founded in 1931, Harwoods is a privately owned family business automotive retail group based on the south of England. The Group serves customers from across Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Kent and beyond.

## Customer Testimonial

*"PAV and Harwoods have a relationship going back a number of years; working together, we are refreshing the LAN for the long term. The Meraki solutions with their licence model and lifetime warranty mean that we have acquired a solution that will last for many years to come and allow the business to manage its network efficiently and securely. Our Account Manager and Technical Account Manager have ensured that the solutions recommended have been a perfect fit for our business"*