



Solotel controls bars with Netbox virtual private network

Dynamic hospitality group, Solotel, has transformed the management of its pubs and bars by using the Netbox to form a virtual private network. Once managers had to physically visit sites to monitor business, now with the Netbox, the 19 sites in the Solotel group can be managed remotely, freeing up staff to focus on the core business. The Netbox, with its integrated suite of security and management tools, has also dramatically reduced Solotel's spam problems, eradicated debilitating malware and given managers control over internet use.

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"The Netbox is invaluable at this stage in the business," Solotel Hotel Management Operations Manager Ben Stephens says. "By helping us manage and control our sites, it allows us more time to do direct business related things. It does its job in the background and we use it as a check and balance when needed. I couldn't see us doing without it."

Rapid expansion demands new IT solution

Solotel has been operating bars and pubs for 20 years. It now boasts a diverse portfolio of hospitality venues including Sydney's spectacular Opera Bar. When the business was smaller, managers physically visited individual hotels to monitor business or deal with any administrative issues that arose. It meant visiting sites at all hours of the day and night and on weekends.

"Before we installed the Netbox there was a lot of legwork. I was on the road, checking if things were correct and monitoring the IT systems for viruses and other issues," Mr Stephens says.

With a rapid expansion in the Solotel group, the number of pubs and clubs doubled to 19, including hotels across Sydney and in Brisbane. Physically visiting each site became impractical. The group sought help from SystemCraft to come up with an IT management solution.

SystemCraft recommended the Netbox as the best fit for Solotel because it offered a suite of features in one easy to use appliance. It gave the hospitality management group a virtual private network, email scanning and reporting as well as internet filtering, reporting and management.

A virtual private network for ultimate control and ease of management

By installing the Netbox, Solotel is able to manage all of its sites from any one of the pubs, the head office and even from a home computer. The Netbox virtual private network provides a secure connection between each site, so a manager can see in real time how any of the hotels are performing at any time. The built in data compression over the link effectively speeds up the internet connection between sites for maximum efficiency. The virtual private network is very easy to set up and requires no client intervention or any extra software on office PCs.

“The virtual private network means that a manager or a business owner can log on at any hotel to find out how business is going anywhere in the group. An owner can even log onto the network from an internet enabled smart phone or home computer to check on stock levels or business performance at one of the hotels. And he or she can do that at any time of the day or night. The Netbox provides complete transparency of the business and delivers complete control,” SystemCraft Managing Director Claudio Antonioli says.

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The Netbox at each site securely connects the hotels and is password protected for complete security. The virtual private network has resulted in massive time savings for Solotel's managers and means that late night and weekend problems can be sorted out from home.

“I would say I'm saving between 10 and 20 hours a week, by managing things remotely and not having to sort out admin and IT problems on the ground,” Mr Stephens says. “And if there are problems late at night or on the weekend, I can dial in and manage their software from home. Prior to installing the Netbox, I'd have to go to venues twice a weekend to deal with things. Now there's no need for that.”

The Netbox has also given Solotel a very effective way to improve overall staff productivity, by reducing time wasted on spam, eliminating disruptive viruses and controlling internet use.

Advanced security features block spam before it is downloaded onto the network, saving Solotel money and bandwidth. They also provide the ultimate protection against malware being downloaded. Prior to installing a Netbox, Solotel was plagued by viruses. PCs had to be replaced every year. The Netbox has given the PCs a normal lifespan, by blocking all known malware.



Opera Bar, Sydney



The Netbox delivers complete control over the internet by giving managers tools to monitor web use, block inappropriate sites and set limits on when sites can be accessed. Regular reports on all internet use are generated automatically for complete transparency of traffic. In this way the company's internet policy can be enforced with minimal effort from managers. And with the virtual private network, internet policies can be enforced across all hotels. Reports can be accessed from anywhere in the network.

"Now we get a weekly report from each of the sites," Mr Stephens says. "We can look at any key issues according to most visited sites and how much traffic is passing through. Venues are aware that we have that information so the threat of consequences has been enough to deter people from misusing the internet."

By installing the Netbox, Solotel has been able to expand its portfolio and seamlessly integrate each new hotel into its virtual private network. This ensures that every new site can be managed in a cost effective and efficient way.

"We're a dynamic hospitality management business," Mr Stephens says. "It's a hands on business. The less time we spend in the office, on administration, the better it is for business. I would definitely recommend the Netbox. It's a great management tool. It really keeps you on top of your IT."

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About Netbox Blue

Netbox Blue is a leading provider of internet and email security, filtering and management solutions. Netbox Blue provides organizations with the tools to protect their network from internal and external threats, control data leakage and ensure staff use the internet productively. The company offers a broad portfolio of products and services including Unified Threat Management appliances, email filtering appliances, soft appliances (for virtual environments) and OEM-ready solutions. The company was established in 1999, is privately held and is based in Australia. Netbox Blue has a presence in 18 countries and has partnerships and distribution agreements with some of the world's largest IT providers.

**More information is available at netboxblue.com
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