



# Stressline

**Industry:** Construction and Manufacturing

## Featured Technology

- **Ethernet Connectivity**
- **Wildix Hosted Phone System**
- **Microsoft Office 365 migration**
- **Microsoft Teams**

Structural building product specialists, Stressline, continued working throughout 2020. However, the unprecedented measures to protect everyone during the coronavirus pandemic meant that their plans for technical infrastructure upgrades were accelerated.

Leading the company's change programme, Phil Hyams and Richard White and were already busy preparing the business case when lockdown in March 2020 changed everything.

They explain: "A lot of people need to be on-site because of the work we do, but the Managing Director, Area Sales Managers, and Senior Managers are often at other locations. We could justify the return on investment in the new infrastructure because performance and productivity would be improved with better connectivity. Our telephone system could be updated, and everyone would be able to work on the same version of Microsoft Office 365.

"When the pandemic led to lockdown we kept working because our sector was considered essential, but many people from the office were furloughed for four weeks and, where they could, others worked from home."



## The Challenge

Stressline is a family-owned business that has been in operation for over 50 years, with its Head office at Stoney Stanton, to the south west of Leicester. The large headquarters estate supports administration and manufacturing for its national operations.

Senior management had already accepted proposals to improve the broadband service which had been provided by BTT for a number of years. This would support off site working and improve communication and collaboration across the main estate.

Phil and Richard continue: "The need to upgrade the phone system was the catalyst, but luckily we had senior management buy-in for the whole plan.

"During lockdown we needed to prioritise our broadband service because we urgently needed to use Microsoft Teams to support remote working. Our existing telephone system couldn't be used from home and people couldn't easily access the information and documents they needed."

There were three clear phases of implementation in the company's plan for broadband, IT, and telephony. The process of tendering for each phase had already started and, despite the need to respond to the pressures of working during lockdown, the normal rigorous processes were followed to make sure the right solutions were commissioned at competitive prices.

BTT was pleased to successfully bid for each of the three phases and only discovered afterwards that it was very unusual for the company to select a single supplier to deliver all aspects of such an ambitious scheme.



## Our Recommendations

Stressline had been using a fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) broadband service and on-site servers, with a virtual private network for the road-based team, directors and senior managers. This provided 80MB for downloads and 20MB for uploads, but the company's needs had outgrown this level of service.

The most urgent requirement was for a broadband service that was fast, effective and reliable with the guaranteed bandwidth essential for reliable videoconferencing, for example.

A fibre ethernet would provide dedicated, uncontended bandwidth for voice and data traffic and remote access. This would provide synchronous 100MB bandwidth for download and upload on a 1GB fibre bearer to support stable videoconferencing, voice over internet protocol (VoIP) services, a virtual private network (VPN) and general internet access.

With improved connectivity it would be possible to upgrade office systems so that everyone could use Microsoft Office 365 and Teams.

To upgrade the phone system, Wildix Collaboration was recommended. As a unified communication system, it provides customisable views, grouped by work teams, with real-time presence information for users, so everyone knows how to contact their colleagues. Services include telephone conferences, video or audio calls, desktop sharing, faxes and virtual reminders, all available from any location.

All three stages needed to be very carefully planned to make sure everything went smoothly, with dedicated support to make sure that any issues were resolved quickly.



## Implementation

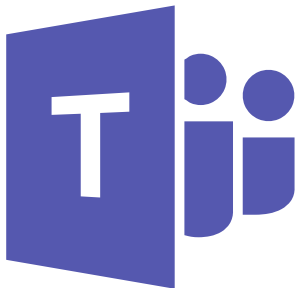
Proposals for the ethernet were agreed at the end of May and it was in operation by the end of June. It was possible to fast track the project because of the well-established relationship between BTT and the installers and because fibre cabling was already available on site.

Phil continues the story: “The company has never experienced this level of change before. The launch of the ethernet took place in just half an hour and was pretty painless. We had a few connectivity issues, but these were quickly resolved.

“We were able to start using Teams in September and the Wildix system went live at the end of November. We have over 100 employees, but not everyone needs to use all the new systems. We have held super user training and admin training to get key people up to speed.

“Now managers and remote workers can keep in touch easily and can see all the documents they need.

“With the new Wildix system we have headsets, which are much easier to use for people who are working on computers, and mobile apps for people to use on smartphones or tablets if they're moving around the site or are on the road.



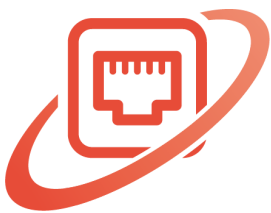


## Implementation

"The system is flexible so we can use either mobile phones or computers and, as a result, we have just 12 desk phones now. You can add pictures and initials to make it easy to find colleagues or to see who is contacting you. You can simply click and drag to transfer calls on the computer.

"We have clients all over the country and our Managing Director is out and about a lot of the time. The system will work for him anywhere, as long as there is an internet connection, even at the end of the garden.

"Not everyone will need to understand and use the full capability, but it will make a big difference operationally. In the next phase of implementation, people will need to learn how to use the system more fully. We are migrating existing systems from Explorer to SharePoint and people will need to get used to this and OneDrive."



Connectivity



I.T.  
Solutions



Phone  
Systems



UCC



## The Benefits

Phil and Richard are confident that the project will deliver significant benefits for Stressline. Phil says: "We're a traditional family business and change is always significant. It was a brave decision for our Managing Director to make this investment in uncertain times, but he could see the benefits immediately.

"The new infrastructure is still in its infancy. Already it's a quantum leap, enabling everyone to collaborate more easily. It will pay for itself when we use it more fully and it allows people to work remotely.

"Using Teams has been the biggest change. We have a lot of weekly meetings and everyone can take part and see documents, which are only printed if they're needed. Our managers can meet virtually with clients and share technical drawings.

"When we hold all-hands meetings, they can be recorded and shared straight away with people who couldn't attend. There are no delays while meeting notes are written and distributed, and people can understand discussions in the context of the meeting.

"We are ISO 9001 accredited and now we can hold quality audits using Teams. We can physically show manufacturing via a phone and the auditor can also speak with operatives.

"For training we can share podcasts instead of having face to face sessions and eventually we plan to have a Teams training channel."



## The Benefits

“BTT has been good at building relationships. We trust them and value their adaptability and flexibility. They are very easy to work with and any hurdles or miscommunications have been quickly overcome. That’s why we chose them for all three parts of the programme.

“We're at the start of a long journey and 2021 will continue our programme of change.”

