CHINA TELECOM AMERICAS

Global Housewares Product Designer and Manufacturer Uses China Telecom Americas' Managed MPLS Solution to Connect its Locations Across Four Continents

Umbra

Umbra is one of the world's most innovative housewares product design companies. A global company based in Toronto, Canada, Umbra brings intelligent design to everyday items. The company develops and manufactures modern housewares products ranging from furniture and frames to bath and kitchen products to entirely new categories of everyday items.

The company was established in 1979 when one of the founders couldn't find a window shade he liked for his apartment. Instead, he created his own — and the company was born. Umbra (which means "shade" in Latin) is still led by the original two founders.

The company reimagines everyday items and creates objects that designers would appreciate, give as gifts or use themselves at home. Today, Umbra sells more than 2,000 home products through 25,000 retailers in 120 countries. Its products include wall décor and picture frames, window rods, jewelry storage, bathroom and closet organization, kitchen gadgets and furniture.

Umbra has numerous locations on four continents: in Asia (Shenzhen, China), North America (Toronto, Canada and Buffalo, New York), Europe (over 30 countries) and South America (São Paolo, Brazil). Umbra's main manufacturing plant is in Shenzhen, China, with warehouses in Toronto, Buffalo, and Shenzhen.[1] The company's vast IT resources and network are shared across all locations from its hosted data center in Toronto. Umbra also provides IT services to its smaller sister company, TCH, an industrial and case hardware manufacturer headquartered in Toronto. TCH's North American facilities are located in Toronto, Buffalo and Dallas.

Business Challenge

Several years ago, Umbra invested in a centralized MPLS [Multi-Protocol Label Switching] network for all of its major computing functions across the globe. The hosted data center in Toronto includes the ERP system and all of Umbra's manufacturing and distribution software.

Having a reliable MPLS connection that is always on and accessible worldwide is very important. Without a connection to the data center in Toronto, the production lines stand still and distribution comes to a halt — which affects customer expectations and satisfaction, as well as revenue.

[1] Shenzhen is a very large city located immediately north of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. A major financial center in southern China, Shenzhen was one of the fastest-growing cities in the world during the 1990s and the 2000s. The city is home to the Shenzhen Stock Exchange as well as the headquarters of numerous high-tech companies.

"China Telecom Americas was extremely customer service-focused. They dropped everything when we needed them." – **Scott Peter,** Umbra IT Infrastructure Manager

Customer Problem

Umbra experienced several issues with its previous North America-based MPLS provider, including:

- An unreliable network and packet loss
- Inadequate support
- Little or no visibility as to when a problem would be fixed
- Bureaucratic and slow response times

In addition, Umbra had to manage the routers on the MPLS network themselves. Eventually, the previous provider added managed services for the MPLS, but "it took months to implement at just one site," said Scott Peter, Umbra's IT infrastructure manager. "Another issue was that network problems required submitting an online help ticket to report, which typically resulted in long wait times for an email response with a scheduled fix. It dragged on and on, and [the process] was very painful."

To efficiently conduct IT worldwide business, Umbra required:

- A stable network with a proven MPLS provider that would quickly respond and resolve any problems in a timely manner;
- Reliable MPLS managed services for 24/7 uptime;
- Lower cost of service and support; and
- Global reach.

Why Umbra Chose China Telecom Americas

"The attraction to China Telecom Americas was its strength and footprint in the Asia Pacific region," Peter said. "We wanted better network performance and reliability from Shenzhen to Toronto."

"China Telecom Americas was able to solve the latency problem with guaranteed 230 milliseconds latency. Our previous provider offered that, too, but in reality they were always at 300 milliseconds. It was tough to get them to acknowledge there was a problem with the Service Level Agreement. There were even problems with billing. Nothing went smoothly."

In 2012, Umbra moved its network to China Telecom Americas, ending its affiliation with a large North America based provider.

How China Telecom is Different

China Telecom has the Best Infrastructure in China

Unlike the North America-based service providers, China Telecom is the world's largest — and fastest — fixed line and broadband network operator. They deliver superior results by investing more than any other provider in terrestrial and cable infrastructure, including cloud, terrestrial and submarine cables. In addition, China Telecom:

- Owns 70 percent of the fixed line infrastructure in China
- Owns 80 percent share of the Chinese data center market
- Operates 70+ PoPs in key metro areas around the world, including more than 300 PoPs in China

Teams are Both Local and Global — Always Available and No Language Barriers

The team supporting Umbra — along with the network operations center (NOC) — is based in Los Angeles, which offers numerous advantages:

- The team in Los Angeles is bilingual and many are native Chinese.
- Because the Pacific Time zone in Los Angeles overlaps with the business day in China, help is just a phone call away. Umbra doesn't have to send an email and wait 12 hours for a response — and they don't have to call in the middle of the night.
- China Telecom Americas has a U.S. project manager who works closely with the Umbra team in Canada — in addition to the team of network engineers — for ongoing 24/7 support.

Customer Solution — Managed MPLS Private Data Network and Global Internet Service

China Telecom Americas delivered an end-to-end, managed MPLS solution with QoS [Quality of Service] that was tailored to Umbra's specific needs and a Service Level Agreement that guaranteed up-time of 99.9 percent.

The solution also included expanded bandwidth and global Internet service — and was implemented successfully in a very short timeframe.

Fast, Smooth Implementation

Peter oversaw the entire implementation. "We had 60 days to implement the China Telecom Americas solution. We were on a tight timeline," he explained.

"One of the things that impressed me was that China Telecom Americas was extremely customer service-focused. They dropped everything when we needed them. Things got done and, if there was a problem, I could just call our rep and get someone from China Telecom Americas right away. No matter what the problem was, we could easily get someone who could manage the router, get us up and running, cut us over, or do whatever needed to be done."

"It was almost as if we had one dedicated person. China Telecom Americas was always available and easy to reach, and its engineer based in Los Angeles was very, very good at what he did. Everything went really fast and smoothly."

Quality of Service and Traffic Shaping

With its complete service approach, China Telecom Americas also provided Umbra with traffic shaping — and "we didn't even have to ask for it," Peter noted. "We were able to put Quality of Service on the MPLS, which was very important to us for CITRIX and VoIP optimization. We were able to do that right at the network level. All we had to do was tell China Telecom Americas what traffic we needed to optimize and they would put it in. It was simple to do and it was quickly implemented."

"Our billing, management, visibility and support are handled a lot better. China Telecom Americas makes it easy to do business with them, and we have been pleased to have them as our network partner."

– Scott Peter, Umbra IT Infrastructure Manager

Results — Dramatic Improvement in Network Performance and Productivity

Umbra increased its network performance and efficiency, saving time and money. Since switching its network to China Telecom Americas, Umbra now enjoys a wide range of benefits:

- **Less down time** — an optimized, stable and improved MPLS network
- **Improved business productivity** — increased revenue, increased production and cost savings due to network efficiency and reliability
- **Shorter response time** — network problems are quickly addressed and resolved
- **Better value** — "With China Telecom, we also increased our bandwidth, bringing greater value to our business," Peter said. "The previous provider might have been able to undercut the cost, but we'd still have their bureaucracy and high latency."
- **Convenience** — "Before, we had one provider for MPLS and another provider for Internet. With China Telecom Americas providing both services, we switched over to one bill. Everything became easy now that we only have one provider — and one bill — to deal with. If we have issues with anything, we only have one person we need to call."

Partnership with China Telecom Americas Delivers Lasting Benefits

Consistent, fast and centralized service and reliable connections across continents have been critical to Umbra's success. Its partnership with China Telecom Americas enables performance that allows the company to focus on continuous improvement and innovation as they develop next generation products for their customers throughout the world.

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To learn how China Telecom Americas can help your business, please contact China Telecom Americas sales at **sales@ctamericas.com**.

About China Telecom

China Telecom Corporation Limited is one of the world's largest and leading integrated information service operators, providing wireline and mobile telecommunications services, Internet access services, information services and other value-added telecommunications services in China and in 70+ countries around the globe. As a wholly owned subsidiary, ***China Telecom Americas*** leverages the corporation's vast infrastructure and experience in China to provide reliable data, IP and voice wholesale services to companies, organizations and international carriers requiring international access to China and beyond. With headquarters in Herndon, Virginia, and offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Jose, Toronto and Sao Paolo, China Telecom Americas provides locally-based, one-stop-shop, and turn-key solutions for everything from Chinese domestic and international data circuits to IDC services, network management, equipment management, system integration, and much more. In 2016, China Telecom was named a Best Telecommunications Company in Asia and a Best Company in China, by *FinanceAsia*.[2] It ranks 132nd on the Fortune Global 500[3] list, by revenue.

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[2] News release about FinanceAsia awards http://www.chinatelecom-h.com/en/media/news/p160525.pdf
[3] Fortune, July 2016 http://beta.fortune.com/global500/china-telecommunications-132