

Case study

Rhodia

# New internet-enabled network creates chemistry for growth

Successfully implementing a global network transformation takes guts, determination, and a whole lot of teamwork. Just ask anyone who's tried it. Yet sometimes it's also the little things that count.

When Rhodia embarked on such a task in Brazil, with the support of BT Global Services, internet links were key to serving hard-to-reach locations in Latin America and elsewhere. So the chosen web interface was one that Rhodia employees were familiar with in the office and at home.

That attention to detail paid dividends in bringing people on board as the rollout progressed. Result? The life of Information Systems Director Fernando Birman was much easier, while Rhodia now has a hugely popular platform for growth worldwide.

“You could almost hear people breathing a sigh of relief at every site as migration to the new network was completed.”

Fernando Birman  
Information Systems Director  
Rhodia



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Fernando Birman, Information Systems Director, Rhodia

## Innovative hybrid network solution using BT IP Connect and the internet helps Rhodia extend its global reach

### Challenge

Rhodia is a global force in the development and production of specialist chemicals for diversified markets from personal care products to automotive applications, generating annual revenues in excess of €5 billion. Its operations depend upon the continuous flow of information worldwide. However, the Rhodia legacy multi-supplier wide area network limited its ability to increase bandwidth, adopt new web applications, and extend its reach into emerging markets.

The company's significant and growing presence in Latin America made that region a natural hub from which to start the process of putting things right. Fernando Birman, Information Systems Director at Rhodia in Brazil, explains: “It was becoming crucial to have a single worldwide supplier able to deliver consistent technology and services, especially in remote and difficult-to-reach regions.”

### Solution

BT Global Services was chosen as communications partner to Rhodia. “We made that decision on the basis of global coverage,” says Antonio Newton Licciardi Jr., Worldwide Technical Architecture Manager at Rhodia, “and the innovative nature of the BT solution.”

The wide area network architecture uses an innovative hybrid solution. A BT IP Connect global backbone serves all key sites, while subsidiary locations get two-way access to the corporate infrastructure using local broadband internet links. High-speed corporate web access is fanned out from dual data centres, each served by BT Internet Connect links.

The BT solution makes even the most remote Rhodia sites an integral part of its supply chain. For example, Rhodia Energy, specialising in the production of renewable fuels from sugar cane deep in the remotest part of São Paulo State, connects into the Rhodia network over BT managed satellite services.

Centralised network management is vital. Antonio Newton adds: “Proactive monitoring isn't just something written into the contract. BT provides us with effective tools for network optimisation.” The visibility of application performance helps Rhodia determine the best use of available bandwidth, and application response time monitoring allows non-business critical applications to be throttled back to prevent congestion. This can speed up application response times by at least one-third.

With flexible working high on the agenda, BT MobileXpress offers connectivity to the Rhodia corporate network for people in the field, irrespective of their location. Designed specifically to support organisations with mobile workforces, BT MobileXpress offers a range of internet access methods along with the highest possible security levels.

The Rhodia and BT teams worked tirelessly together to deploy the new network. It was fully implemented in just 24 months, from technical design to the migration of around 100 Rhodia sites and 15,000 users across the world. Managed BT Assure firewall services are provided and monitored from the BT network operations centre in Paris, ensuring enforcement of the Rhodia global internet security policy.

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Antonio Newton Licciardi Jr.  
Worldwide Technical Architecture Manager  
Rhodia

## Value

The hybrid solution architecture delivered by BT has enabled Rhodia to seamlessly run a company-wide SAP ERP application for global supply chain integration. Meanwhile cloud-based applications like salesforce.com are available right across the organisation. Better still, Rhodia people can access all such applications from anywhere. Mobile staff and people on the move work just as if they were sitting at their office desks.

“The original challenge we set BT was to increase bandwidth tenfold at no more than double the historic cost,” recalls Antonio Newton. “With this ground-breaking architecture we achieved that with ease, while improving communication with suppliers, customers, and employees right along the value chain.”

BT MobileXpress has not only enabled flexible working but also improved business continuity. Fernando Birman confirms: “Remote access enabled the business to continue to work effectively even in the face of the avian flu pandemic and transport disruptions across Europe,” he recalls, “as well as adverse weather conditions during the North American winter.”

There are less obvious benefits too. Rhodia has joined the social networking revolution. Although operating solely in a B2B market, high-speed web access through BT Internet Connect offers Rhodia people a powerful tool to personalise communications. This promotes brand awareness, educates consumers, and builds relationships.

Fernando Birman concludes: “The choice of BT was a bold move that paid off. I’m proud of what we’ve achieved by working together. There are few companies that can boast a single command structure worldwide – along with common infrastructure, standardised processes, and company-wide applications – all managed through one global contract.”

Rhodia was recently acquired by Solvay Group, and the flexibility of the BT hybrid VPN architecture will prove invaluable as the two companies integrate their systems.

## Core BT services

- IP Connect global
- Internet Connect
- Assure managed firewalls
- MobileXpress
- BT managed satellite services



## Offices worldwide

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