

Delivering Boardroom-level Value

Great Southern Bank is fulfilling business and customer goals with the help of Cisco ACI



The customer summary

Customer name

Great Southern Bank

Industry

Financial services

Location

Brisbane, Queensland,
Australia

Challenges

- Challenge the status quo in Australia's banking industry
- Accelerate service innovations and customer experiences
- Align data center, branch, and cloud resources

Solution

- Software-defined network (SDN) spanning two data centers, more than 50 branch locations, and public cloud environments

Results

- Established a software-defined network that extends to branch locations and the cloud
- Accelerated network changes from weeks to hours
- Pushed IT to the frontlines of business enablement and growth

Big ambitions

Great Southern Bank wants to help all Australians own their own home. And through service innovations and better, faster customer experiences, they're aiming to compete in new ways against Australia's "big four" banks.

"We've been challenging the banking status quo and enriching our customers' lives for the past 75 years," says Ville Laakso, head of enterprise technology at Great Southern Bank. "As we continue to grow our business and help fulfill the home ownership dreams of our customers, technology enablement and innovation are essential."

To do so, the bank needed to update the aging systems in its two data centers. The core switches were at maximum capacity. Production and development servers were intermingled. And with only a single service link and no redundancy at each branch location, a loss of network connectivity risked ATM and service availability at those sites.

"To deliver value to the business and our customers, we needed a massive technology overhaul," says Laakso.

Software-defined network

Great Southern Bank initiated its technology overhaul by replacing its legacy network with Cisco® Application Centric Infrastructure (Cisco ACI™), the world's leading software-defined networking (SDN) solution. The multi-pod design provides full redundancy and fault isolation between the bank's two active/active data centers, extends network policies to branch offices and the public cloud, and is centrally managed from a single console.

No longer intermixing infrastructure resources and users, Great Southern Bank has segmented its Cisco ACI fabric into five unique networks: DevTest, member services, corporate services, banking services, and non-production services. Each domain has its own firewall, and user access is being monitored and enforced by Cisco Identity Services (Cisco ISE).

According to Laakso, unwavering uptime and end-to-end visibility have been hallmarks of the new network fabric.

"ACI has been rock solid, and we can see the connectivity and performance of workloads and applications in addition to switches," he says. "Having full visibility of our data centers and the ability to make changes across both of them is so much better and easier from an operational standpoint."

With many processes now automated, network changes take hours instead of days.

"We're automating entire workflows," Laakso says, noting firewall changes and firmware updates. "Once everything is fully defined, you press a button and the network does it all."

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Head of Enterprise Technology, Great Southern Bank
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Boardroom-level value

Cisco ACI isn't just aligning the bank's data centers, but also its branch locations and public cloud resources. The core network connects to a full-stack Cisco Meraki™ solution at each branch, including wired, wireless, and SD-WAN infrastructure. And with tie-ins to AWS and eventually Azure, the bank has policy control and consistency across on-premises and cloud environments.

"We can focus on workloads and be location agnostic," says Laakso. "Whether they're placed on-prem or in the cloud, we'll provide options and let the business decide."

The bank's IT operations are changing as a result, shifting from network centricity to application centricity and from hardware management to business enablement.

"We're changing our culture, operations, and skillsets to deliver more options, speed, and value to the business," Laakso says.

The difference is being noticed at the highest levels of the organization, with technology uptime now monitored by the bank's board of directors.

"To compete with the big four banks in Australia, we need to deliver better, faster services to our customers," says Laakso. "We've cut the amount of time it takes to receive a home loan in half, and a third of our customers' loan applications are being processed within two days. Cisco technologies have been a key enabler of these improvements, and we're just getting started."

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Product list

- [Cisco Application Centric Infrastructure \(Cisco ACI\)](#)
- [Cisco Nexus® 9000 Series switches](#)
- [Cisco Identity Services Engine \(Cisco ISE\)](#)
- [Cisco Meraki Cloud-Managed Wi-Fi](#)
- [Cisco Meraki Cloud-Managed Security & SD-WAN](#)
- [Cisco Meraki Cloud-Managed Switches](#)