

SYSTIMAX®

SOLUTIONS

High-performance Networks for the Financial Sector Banking on Category 6 Cabling

When KBC Bank's International Division fitted out its new Brussels headquarters, it wanted a cable infrastructure to meet company needs for at least the next decade. Network traffic in the new building was set to grow rapidly since it was designed to house one of Belgium's biggest dealing rooms with provision for 300 desks. In addition to this major demand on bandwidth, the structured cabling system also had to handle long-term expansion in all the Division's other functions.

Both voice and data services are carried by the same cabling infrastructure throughout five floors of offices and two service levels. As well as video conferencing, television, information services and stock exchange links for dealers, the system also supports office, administration and banking applications. Both in dealing rooms and the rest of the company, business growth is continually increasing traffic over the network.

"Cabling is the foundation of our IT infrastructure," said Geert Goossenaerts, Project Manager for IT installations in the new building. "So we wanted to ensure it had throughput potential to meet all our current and future needs."

As systems were being specified for its new offices, KBC Bank worked closely with its consultants, CBI (Coleman Bennett International Plc). CBI, specialists in procurement and management of IT installations, devised a tendering process that quickly narrowed prospective cabling suppliers to a list of three. The winner was Getronics, a leader in world-wide ICT services and a SYSTIMAX® BusinessPartner with a strong track record in supplying high performance networks to the financial sector.

To meet the Bank's needs, Getronics proposed the SYSTIMAX GigaSPEED® Solution. This offers end-to-end performance in the gigabit range, using matched Category 6 compliant components to give full Class E channel performance. Included in the solution are copper cables for horizontal runs, fiber cables for backbones, connectors, patch panels and cordage.

"Communication delays cannot be tolerated when deals worth millions of Euros depend on up-to-the-second information and the ability to trade immediately," said Geert Goossenaerts. "So the double bandwidth of Category 6 cable compared with Category 5 alternatives is a good investment."

The GigaSPEED Solution was chosen in preference to alternatives using FTP (Foil-shielded Twisted Pair) cabling. It can run KBC's 100BASE-T network with capacity to spare for upgrades to gigabit Ethernet and included the SYSTIMAX SCS 20-year extended product warranty and application assurance program.

During installation Getronics worked, under the project management of CBI, alongside 20 contractors installing other systems in the building. As in all such installation, co-ordination and co-operation between contractors was essential to finishing on time and on budget.

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“Good project management was vital for all our IT installation work, since we wanted the new facility operational as soon as possible,” said Geert Goossenaerts. “We had a total of eight main IT contractors working on the site, and most of them needed the cabling connections before they could complete their work.”

To ensure network connections were available in the building when required, the cabling system was “prefabricated” at Getronics’ premises at Assen in the Netherlands. Horizontal runs and risers were pre-cut to length and connectors attached so that installation time on site was minimized. Patch panels were also pre-assembled using the space-saving SYSTIMAX 110 connector system.

The system has over four thousand outlets connected to patch panels via under-floor cabling runs. For added safety in the event of fire, all cable sheathing is of the Low Smoke Zero Halogen type. Prefabrication allowed Getronics to spend eleven weeks planning and building the system before entering the KBC site. The full installation was complete nine weeks later. A major test then came in September 1999 when KBC brought two dealing rooms trading a full range of financial instruments from their old site and combined them in the new facility.

Each of the 200 active dealing desks has eight GigaSPEED copper and two OptiSPEED® fiber connections, and there are similar provisions for 100 reserve desks. Active desks were patched into the cabling system, providing the vital connections to world financial exchanges, transaction processing systems and information services such as Reuters and Bloomberg. Getronics also installed and connected an IPC telephone system to serve the dealers.

Telephones and three flat screens on each desk are currently connected via the GigaSPEED UTP (Unshielded Twisted Pair) connections. The OptiSPEED fiber channels are kept in reserve to provide extra capacity for future developments.

To ensure resilience if cabling is damaged by external factors, the new offices have two communications rooms in different parts of the building. Cross connection of dealing desks to both rooms, via patch panels on each floor, allows dealers to have half their communications capacity even if one communication room is out of action.

Reliability of the GigaSPEED Solution has been 100 per cent since it was commissioned. This is a record that is being maintained as communications traffic grows each time a new department moves to the building and is patched into the network. As a result, dealers and other staff in the building remain happy, and life in the IT department is simplified.

“We specified high quality cabling and network design to provide reliable network performance in all foreseeable situations - both now and in years ahead,” said Geert Goossenaerts. “As businesses rely increasingly on their networks, there can be no compromise on cabling.”

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