



Telecommunications giant stays in compliance with superior AS2



Company: Distributel
Company profile: Canada's leading independent telecommunications services provider
Region: North America
Industries: Telecommunications
Business need: Use of specific protocols to meet technical regulations
IT issue: Deeply customized implementation and workflow that required significant testing

Business Need

Distributel Communications Limited is Canada's leading independent telecommunications services provider, with a successful track record of delivering quality service for nearly 30 years. Distributel offers a variety of popular services including high-speed internet, television, and home phone services to residential customers. Distributel's industry is a highly regulated one. In fact, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) requires the secure exchange of data files between telecommunications service providers and software vendors over AS2.

This means that connecting with other telecommunications companies, such as Bell, Telus, Rogers and Videotron for services like porting phone numbers (which allows customers to keep existing phone numbers) would require requests transferred via AS2. The same goes for core telecommunications functions, such as choosing a long distance plan, billing and collections, and even arranging to host critical 411 or 711 information.

A cost-effective, reliable AS2 solution would help to power both communications and business growth for Distributel, in driving core business functions.

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IT Challenge

Canada's Telecom Decision CRTC 2015-435 mandated in 2015 that telecommunications service providers use SHA-2 encryption for all exchange of digital information, meaning Distributel needed to make changes to remain in compliance with the regulatory body. Migrating from SHA-1 to SHA-2 isn't difficult technically, but it does necessitate a very involved workflow change that requires lots of testing.

Distributel was using AS2 software from another vendor to run its business communication exchanges. When the CRTC changed the security requirements for data exchanges to be done using SHA-2, Distributel had a problem. The IT team thought it could simply cut over its existing AS2 solution, which was running over TLS 1.1, to TLS 1.2 to support the mandated SHA-2 function. It should have been a simple process, but the software did not fully support a move to TLS 1.2, and Distributel was left to find a new AS2 solution that could keep them in compliance.

The Solution

Distributel met with several vendors who offer a Drummond-certified AS2 solution that complies with the updated CRTC standards. The AS2 community in Canada is a very tight-knit one, and upon a recommendation from Vincent Koo, who joined Distributel through the recent acquisition of Yak Communications, opted for a software demo from Cleo. Cleo is a leader in AS2 and has seen widespread adoption of its B2B integration solutions in Canada to meet ever-growing compliance mandates. In fact, Cleo is one of the few integration companies that's been certified in every Drummond Group SHA-2 test since the option was introduced in 2012.

Distributel team members knew they couldn't use their existing solution, and the software solutions they investigated from other vendors didn't support AES-256 encryption, were very difficult to work with, and not very intuitive, according to Craig Williams, senior manager of information systems development operations at Distributel. In contrast, in an assessment of Cleo Integration Cloud, Williams stated that "the demonstration of the Cleo solution showcased that it was extremely straightforward and easy to use, and the entire team appreciated the simplicity right away."

With the purchase of Yak, the company now has multiple Cleo solutions in place, giving the company a reliable tool for consolidating systems and integrating back-end technology to streamline operations.



"Before Cleo, AS2 had been a bad word around here for eight years, as it was difficult to maintain, sometimes crashed, and support was less than ideal. Overall, our experience with the previous software was a relatively subpar experience. The Cleo solution delivers exactly what we need, and the support is second to none."

— **Craig Williams**,
senior manager
of IS development
operations, Distributel

"Cleo works extremely well. Since introduction, it has become a well-oiled machine. We have had no issues, no downtime, and the support has been outstanding."

— **Vincent Koo**,
Manager of billing
operations, Distributel

