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No strays for 'live' install

After an extensive search, a large Sydney data centre interestingly chooses a pre-terminated Cat 6 solution as its infrastructure platform.

Market leading data centre provider, Equinix, has a commitment to provide its clients with the latest infrastructure and technology at its 6000m2 Sydney Internet Business Exchange™ (IBX®) centre.

Equinix is a leading provider of network-neutral data centre facilities and relies on a first-class physical level infrastructure to provide its customers with connections to the carrier of their choice.

After extensive research, the company chose RapidNet from HellermannTyton as its future cabling platform for the IBX. The Cat 6 pre-terminated and pre-tested solution was the ideal choice for Equinix.

Background

At the IBX, multiple incoming carrier networks terminate on a demarcation frame housed in the 'Meet Me' room. From there, Equinix provides the cabling infrastructure to server farms made up of industry standard communication cabinets and racks.

The Equinix Sydney data centre was commissioned in early 2001 and consisted of single and multi-mode fibre optic cable and Cat 5e cabling (the highest Standards compliant cabling solution at the time).

Power and air conditioning is reticulated under raised flooring with the lighting and communication cabling infrastructure accommodated overhead. The copper cabling is managed on a multi-tier ladder rack with the fibre optic cabling reticulated via a specialised plastic duct system.

"It was apparent that the original Cat 5e cable infrastructure was going to inhibit the services the data centre could offer its clients by creating bottlenecks. With customers and carriers increasingly gearing towards higher data rates and ever-growing bandwidth requirements, it was clear that the legacy

Cat 5e cabling plant needed to be augmented. The choice was clear for a Cat 6 solution due to its ability to support 1Gbps," says HellermannTyton business development manager, Peter Davis.

Deciding on a technology platform was straightforward, he adds. What was more complex was selecting the most appropriate solution for the IBX and ascertaining which cabling vendor offered the best solution.

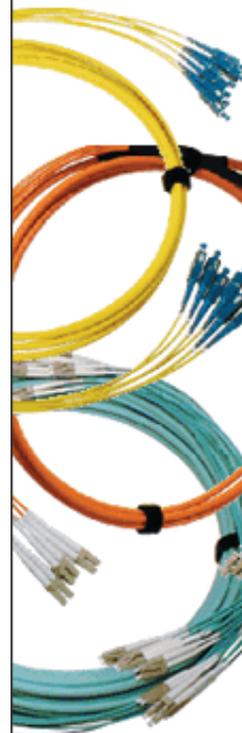
Three major issues influenced the decision away from a conventional installation.

Equinix facility manager, Paul Macpherson, was concerned with the security implications of relying on third party contractors, an issue associated with long-term cabling upgrade projects. In order to protect the security of Equinix's customers, he was keen to utilise a solution which could be deployed rapidly by his team of Equinix engineers, while maintaining the highest installation standards.

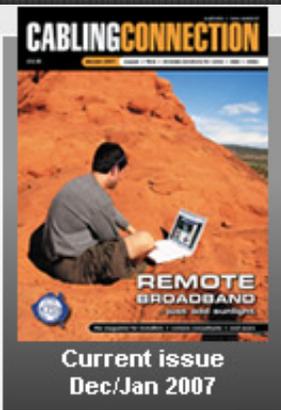


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“We offer our clients the highest forms of security systems, including 24x7x365 surveillance, CCTV and biometric access control to protect their investment. At Equinix, we conduct in-depth security checks into our own staff. This is not always possible with third-party contractors,” he stated.

On-site termination can be a laborious job and with all the best intent, mistakes in termination can occur. Mistakes are often only discovered and corrected after the system test, which can delay the provisioning of services.

“In most cases, cabling is carried out before the installation and commissioning of the active equipment. This ensures a clear working environment for the cabling contractors,” says Paul.

“In our situation, most cabling upgrades are within live racks, both ours and our clients. This means that a stray nut, bolt or a dropped piece of kit could take out a client’s service and cause many thousands of dollars in lost revenues and damaged equipment - this scenario is not acceptable to Equinix and its customers.”

In Equinix’s case, the cabling upgrade is to be carried out on ‘live’ cabinets. This, along with other concerns, virtually eliminated a conventional cabling solution and left Equinix to consider a pre-terminated solution.

Equinix created a list of mandatory requirements to aid in the selection of a pre-terminated solution. The cable solution had to be:

- Standards compliant
- readily available in Australia
- competitively priced

The company considered pre-terminated solutions from two vendors in Australia and selected the HellermannTyton RapidNet solution as it felt it was the only solution that met its mandatory requirements.

“RapidNet is Standards compliant, which is a requirement not only for Equinix but also from all its clients that ask that any services-reliant infrastructure is manufactured to an international Standard,” says Peter.

“Availability was also a requirement along with a fast turn around time to meet clients’ time frame. RapidNet was the only solution that could do this. Furthermore, RapidNet’s solution generates cost savings, which are not undermined even on the rare occasion that an installation team is required,” says Peter.

RapidNet also addresses the security concerns many data centres have. “Using a pre-terminated solution allows my small team, who are all licensed cablers, to carry out the upgrade program, which eliminates the need for installers to come on site, and thus my security concern,” says Paul.

“RapidNet pre-terminated solutions are assembled in a controlled environment under strict QA guidelines and are 100% tested and certified before shipping,” confirms Peter.

“This results in no re-work issues or delays in provisioning services making this solution virtually risk free.”

By design, pre-terminated solutions require no on-site termination. Equinix’s concern of disruption to services and damage to equipment by accidental causes is removed.

Paul adds: “Another advantage of RapidNet’s pre-terminated solution is that I can keep looms in stock on-site. These are readily available from Computer Room Solutions, my preferred vendor of RapidNet. This allows my team to provision new services almost immediately. I do not have to wait for an installation team to factor my requirement into their work schedule.”

Although the RapidNet cabling is installed in overhead ladder racking, making it highly visible, the inherent design of the cable looms allows for a professional installation in minimum time. Paul says this is a very important issue as the IBX has regular visits from potential clients who make decisions to co-locate at Equinix partially based on the appearance of the cabling and the data centre.

The RapidNet solution is in six-port increments and it fits the Equinix model perfectly as a basic service of six ports is provided to clients. 

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