CASE STUDY

Allied Irish Banks

The Customer

Allied Irish Banks is a digital banking institution with multiple award-winning applications for mobile banking. It came into existence in 1966 as a result of the amalgamation of three other banks, and currently has more than 300 branches and head-office sites with more than 500 offsite ATMs and merchant devices. With a focus on supporting economic recovery in Ireland, AIB provides banking services to individuals and businesses—particularly small to medium enterprises. Personal banking services range from mortgages to insurance to investments, and business services include credit cards, merchant services, financing, and pension and retirement funds.

The Challenge

The majority of AIB’s banking transactions take place away from the branch counter today, and the bank is working to add technology to its branch locations with self-service kiosks and intelligent deposit devices, and to enhance its mobile and online banking services.

AIB’s network supports internal financial systems and external customer-facing systems, which makes the management of Domain Name System (DNS), Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP), and IP address management (IPAM) extremely critical. When asked what the consequences of a network failure would be, Daniel Turner, network planner for the Telecoms group within AIB IT, says, “We wouldn’t be able to operate effectively—back to paper transactions!”

The bank already had a commercial-grade solution in place that utilized Alcatel-Lucent Vital QIP for internal IPAM and a solution from another vendor for external. But in 2010, it was time to upgrade the system, and Vital QIP upgrades are time-consuming because it has so many components. The Sybase database, for instance, requires an enterprise server on the front

Customer: Allied Irish Banks (AIB) has its headquarters in Dublin and more than 40 branches throughout Ireland.

Challenges: AIB needed to upgrade its DNS, DHCP, and IP address management capabilities, and was looking for a more easily managed, more economical solution than the legacy Vital QIP system in place.

Solutions:
• Infoblox Grid™ technology
• Infoblox DDI

Results:
• Reduced licensing costs
• Increased management efficiency
• Reliable, trouble-free operations
• Quick and easy upgrades
end, separate from the appliances that host DNS services. In addition, the
per-IP-address licensing is very expensive, especially in an environment like
AIB’s where devices are frequently added to the network. So upgrading and
continuing to operate the solution was an expensive proposition, and Turner
wanted to see if there was a better alternative.

The Solution
AIB compared the three-year projected costs of a major upgrade of the Vital QIP
platform with the cost of installing and testing a new system from Infoblox. The
numbers indicated that switching to Infoblox was the more economical option,
and after a year or two would provide a substantial saving to the business.

A proof-of-concept demonstration by Infoblox convinced Turner that in addition
to saving money, Infoblox could reduce the time and effort involved in supporting
core network services. The Infoblox solution was easy to install and maintain, and
it had all the features Turner’s team needed, so AIB went ahead and replaced the
Vital QIP system with four Infoblox appliances deployed using patented Infoblox
Grid™ technology.

Turner points out that, since VitalQIP is an enterprise-grade product, the decision
to switch to Infoblox wasn’t about added functionality. “What Infoblox did
excellently,” he says, “is give us a solution that replicated the functionality we
had, but didn’t require nearly as much attention.” The Infoblox Grid is engineered
for efficiency and reliability. Distributed appliances are managed from a central
Grid master, and upgrades can be pushed out to multiple locations with the click of a button. Principles of
high availability such as a central shared database, back-and-forth health checking, and redundancy make the
architecture reliable, resilient, and extremely easy to manage.

AIB’s appliances are deployed as “active/active” pairs, which means that they can back each other up and
at the same time distribute the workload. This gives them redundancy without having any idle capacity. The
boxes run Infoblox integrated DNS, DHCP, and IPAM (DDI). AIB is using them for internal DNS, and they are
also integrated with Microsoft Active Directory servers as the central DNS repository.

During the installation, Infoblox worked with a partner to export records from the Vital QIP database, using
Infoblox transformation algorithms to reformat them so that they would show up properly in the Infoblox
database. This process went well, and they did a trial run and then cut over.

The Results
The cost savings indicated in the initial comparison were realized, and the Infoblox solution paid for itself in
three years, but Turner cites advantages beyond cost-effectiveness. “The Infoblox system has been inherently
stable,” he says. “We haven’t had any problems with it. I’m very comfortable with the fully redundant Grid
architecture.” He also points out that the web-based interface enables his 20 administrators to have access
to the database from anywhere, and that built-in role-based administration allows him to give users only the
access their duties require.

The ease of maintenance and the reliability are also appreciated. “I’ve performed a number of upgrades that
were very quick,” says Turner. “Just download the files, and install them on the appliances. In the days when
we had Vital QIP, I had to work every few days on problems, which I don’t have to do anymore. And the man
hours saved can be reallocated to more strategic activities.
“Infoblox has freed me up to manage more systems, and we’ve had fewer issues,” Turner says. “We’ve gotten time savings from the ease of operations, maintenance, and upgrades. And the cutover was seamless. We did it on a Sunday evening, and on Monday morning, the users didn’t even know that the system had been changed.” He concludes by saying that, based on the stability plus the ease of operation and maintenance, he would definitely recommend Infoblox to fellow networking professionals.