

ITS makes Eurovision broadcast run smoothly with DDoS Protection Services

Client profile

ITS Technology Group has become an established UK provider of high-bandwidth gigabit connectivity to businesses through its wholesale and reseller partner program. Its infrastructure supports services at speeds of up to 10Gbps for more than 500 partners.

The company has been on a strong growth drive in recent years, rolling out its Faster Britain full-fiber network. The network now passes more than 450,000 UK business premises, with a bid to hit 1 million in the next few years.

Which services?

- DPS Max
- IP Transit



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Anthony Farrell, Head of Networks, ITS

Summary

ITS was selected as a partner for the globally recognized Eurovision Song Contest in May 2023, held in Liverpool. Handing off traffic to broadcasters, the company supported the event with its Faster Britain full-fiber network. The need for strong security was high on the agenda pre-event, after police thwarted attempts by pro-Russian hackers to disrupt the previous year's edition in Turin, Italy, won by Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra.

ITS's service for the event needed to be put in place quickly, given that Liverpool was only chosen for the event in October 2022 – with winners Ukraine unable to host due to its ongoing conflict with Russia. Having already had a long-standing relationship with NTT DATA for IP transit, ITS turned to us for DDoS Protection Services (DPS). Signing up to the DPS Max service to enable key features such as automitigation, we were able to get things in place fast and the event went off without a hitch. ITS is now considering continuing their partnership on distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) protection with us.

Business need

On song with added protection

UK business fiber provider ITS was selected as a partner for the Eurovision Song Contest in May 2023 based on its dark-fiber core network architecture. This was done via the LCR Connect joint venture between ITS, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and construction company NGE.

It also involved working with the UK's National Cyber Security Centre.

For resilience, the service was to be delivered from the venue at Liverpool's M&S Bank Arena to independent locations in London, where internet traffic would be handed off to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and European Broadcasting Union (EBU) so the show could be televised across the world.

The size of the event meant it was crucial for a fully secure service to be put in place, ensuring the broadcast would not be affected. That was particularly the case considering the efforts by hackers to disrupt the 2022 edition in Italy, and the growing volume and sophistication of DDoS attacks across the globe in recent years. Furthermore, rather than just comprising a single evening with a live final, the full event ran over two weeks and included two live semifinals.

"We needed to provide a fully resilient solution to the BBC and the EBU for internet and broadcast traffic, and for voting traffic as well," says Anthony Farrell, Head of Networks at ITS. "The aim was to be ready for any event, whether just a standard failure or something more malicious."

Over the years, ITS had built up a trusted partnership with us for IP transit via our Global IP Network. They therefore approached NTT DATA for a DDoS service to provide added protection due to our tried and tested high levels of support.

Solution

Turning things up to the Max

To provide the wide-scale cyberdefense needed for Eurovision, ITS chose our DPS Max service. DPS Max is the highest level of protection we provide, including proactive attack detection and mitigation, and access to our network security team.

ITS had already built a close relationship with us over the years. From this collaboration, ITS knew that we had the technical skills, knowledge, and capabilities to handle the Eurovision Song Contest. They had rapid access to the support team through the network operations center whenever needed – providing swift contact with level-three engineers who could quickly resolve complex problems.

We set things up quickly before the competition, which was crucial for an event taking place in the first half of 2023 when we were only contracted for its DPS service early that year. "ITS was obviously very keen to get it arranged and provisioned really quickly as well," says Brian Foust, Vice President of Customer Solutions at the Global IP Network division of NTT DATA.

Foust elaborates further on how we moved swiftly, working closely with all other parties to ensure things ran smoothly. "We were involved in quite a number of calls with ITS, with the production team for the BBC, and with security teams," he says. "ITS was looking for somebody with a good, strong network, and who also had the DDoS capabilities to be able to absorb and clean any potential attacks."

Outcomes

Zero points of failure for the Eurovision Song Contest

The event passed smoothly, with all systems well set up and primed to deal with any issues after testing in the run-up to the contest. That was important given the scale of the competition, which reached 162 million viewers across its three live shows and with the UK recording its highest-ever audience – averaging almost 10 million for the final.

Making it easy to speak to the right person

“The NTT DATA team was constantly monitoring to make sure that nothing went wrong. Having a global presence, but simultaneously being able to provide that local level of support was also key,” says Foust. “The ability for customers to speak to someone quickly is vital, rather than going from pillar to post to try and find out who you need to chat to.”

Effective threat detection and mitigation

A threat was detected in the time leading up to the event and the system reacted effectively. “The automated mitigation kicked in and did exactly what it should have done, so there was no risk as such,” says ITS’s Farrell. “The beauty of that was our customer saw the platform working as expected before the event started.”

Handling demanding situations

He adds that the success in working collaboratively for a demanding situation was a big plus, while the portal that we provide with DPS Max is “very intuitive”, enabling observation of historical data, the ability to see when an attack takes place, and how it’s mitigated.

“The solution that was provided around cost, solution and capability, given the pedigree of NTT DATA as well, made it almost a no-brainer,” says Farrell.

Future cooperation

ITS is considering potential options for DPS services with us in future, seeing the need to invest in DDoS protection as it scales. “That we want to understand what’s next is testament to the experience that both myself and ITS has had during this engagement,” says Farrell. “It’s very easy to do business with NTT DATA.”

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