

Delivering zero trust access for Aster Group UK with Zscaler Private Access

A S T E R
GROUP

Website: aster.co.uk

Location: Devizes, UK

Industry: Real Estate

User Count: 1,400 users

Zscaler Products: Zscaler Private Access (ZPA)

Based in the UK, Aster Group is a not-for-dividend, ethically-driven organization whose vision is that everyone has a home. Aster Group UK provides safety and security to their customers through their services. They currently own and manage over 30,000 homes, with a value of £1.6 billion.

The need for remote access for a now mobile workforce

While Aster's goal to provide safe, reliable and accessible housing hadn't changed, the IT team recognized a shift in the way their users were working. They now needed to empower users to work remotely. This shift to the remote user required Aster Group to rethink the way they were providing access to applications.

Their previous remote access solution, Citrix Netscaler, was used by employees and third parties. But the increasingly mobile workforce had high expectations and quickly outpaced the existing capability; Aster needed a future proof solution to satisfy the new ways of working. Aster Group began searching for a remote access security solution that would enable their partners and mobile workforce, without frustrating end users, without placing them on the network and without added complexity for IT admins.

Additionally, Aster Group is in the process of consolidating servers to free up additional resources (upwards of 15 TB of space). This calls for a simple solution that can cut down on complexity due to the consolidation, but still allow users to connect securely to mission-critical applications.

“ We needed a remote access security solution that would enable our remote users and third-party partners, without the frustrations of a traditional VPN solution. ”

Neil Mallon
Technology Strategy Lead
Aster Group

Zero trust access to any app, any device, anywhere with Zscaler

By researching and attending industry events, Aster Group discovered Zscaler Private Access (ZPA). After a Proof of Concept that was supported by UK Zscaler partner Truststream, the IT team decided to change to the Cloud based solution. Today, over 70% of the company's workforce use ZPA to securely connect to internal applications from any device and from anywhere. The company has embraced a zero trust access strategy that gives only authorized users access to specific internal applications.

ZPA is the future proof technology for secure remote access. We are no longer limited by traditional connectivity constraints, but can continue to adopt cloud freely in the way it was intended.

Neil Mallon, Technology Strategy Lead, Aster Group

Eliminating the attack surface via "inside-out connectivity"

One of the largest reasons why the company chose ZPA, is its unique ability to establish "inside-out" connections from the application to the authorized user, without exposing the IP address of the application. This "inside-out connectivity" is different from other software-defined perimeter solutions as well as virtual firewalls which are IP-centric and require

inbound connectivity. These are often vulnerable to DDoS attacks and require IT to set up ACLs, firewall policies and security groups.

With ZPA, their IT team can set and enforce granular access policies and never place remote users on the network. Instead the Zscaler cloud hosts the policies their admins set and provides a brokered connection between an authorized user and internal application. Aster Group uses ZPA's outbound connections from the application to the user to ensure their applications remain invisible to unauthorized users. Unlike other VPN/remote access solutions, where authenticated users are given full and lateral network access, ZPA provides only applications access, not network access. The result is a secure network and segmented application access granted on a zero trust basis.

The cloud effect - less complexity, rapid deployment and more security

ZPA is a completely software and cloud-hosted service; minimal complexity; requiring no physical appliances to be deployed or setup. This made it easy for Aster Group to deploy ZPA into their environment as they did not have to implement additional infrastructure. Nor did they need to spend time creating access control lists, implementing firewalls or creating firewall policies - manual processes which are all painful to enforce.

In the end, Aster Group was able to deploy ZPA three times faster than planned. In fact, by the end of the first month of their deployment, they had ZPA rolled out to four times more users than originally planned. This boosted user productivity and allowed them to work remotely, regardless of device or location. For IT admins, they could provide secure access to internal applications and empower their mobile workforce more quickly.

“ Today, about **70%** of our workforce is connecting to internal applications with ZPA. We’ve received great feedback from our users and we look forward to increasing that number in the near future. ”

Neil Mallon, Technology Strategy Lead, Aster Group

Enabling datacenter consolidation today, and application migration tomorrow

Aster Group is in the process of consolidating their servers to free up resources. With ZPA they are able to minimize potential downtime or loss in productivity during this process. Since ZPA is infrastructure agnostic, the team does not need to worry about incompatibility issues. User traffic can be routed directly to the application’s new location within minutes.

The company is also exploring their options as it relates to moving internal applications to cloud (AWS or Azure). Typically during app migration to the cloud both networking and security introduce added complexity and slow the process. Aster Group knows that ZPA’s cloud-based architecture will help ease this process by accelerating cloud migration and providing faster and more secure access to internal cloud-hosted applications.

As any other organization, Aster Group needs to do more with less. Not only does ZPA optimize connectivity to apps in cloud and the datacenter, but it serves as an integral part of Aster’s DR and BCP strategy. Allowing swift recovery and crucial connectivity, ZPA enables an agile system for Aster Group to restore any servers or services needed, regardless of type or location.

BENEFITS

- Improved user experience
- Secure remote access for 70% of users
- Reduced risk due to third-parties
- 330% faster than expected deployment time
- Simplified datacenter consolidation

