

One Network, Many Benefits

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Cost savings, easier maintenance, and new services - Singapore Polytechnic gets perks with a converged network on Internet Protocol telephony

Singapore Polytechnic (SP), which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, may be the oldest polytechnic here but it constantly renews its facilities and IT capabilities for its students and staff.

Mr Chang Boon Hai, director of the computer and information systems department, explained: 'We want to be able to continue to attract high-calibre students.'

'To do this, we have to find new ways to bring education on demand - or e-learning - to the growing Internet generation of students. A multimedia environment becomes essential to providing learning in a mobile world. So, a highly reliable and scalable network is an absolute must-have.'

SP takes a holistic approach to network planning to make this a reality. It has created an integrated network combining wired and wireless technology from Cisco to provide connectivity from anywhere on the campus.

Its high-speed Gigabit Ethernet network, based on Cisco Catalyst Series Switches, was built in 2000 and a wireless network of 500 Cisco Aironet Access Points was put in place late last year.

Mr Chang said: 'At the same time, our PABX system was over 10 years old and was becoming more complex and costly to operate and maintain.'

Leveraging on its existing investment in the Singapore Polytechnic Intelligent Computing Environment Gigabit Ethernet Network Backbone

(Spice 2), SP embarked on a project to replace the PABX system with IP telephony.

'The Cisco IP Telephony solution was chosen as it offered a seamless integration with our existing network infrastructure, which is largely based on Cisco solutions.'

'The IP infrastructure now enables us to transmit all voice, data and video via Spice 2.'

Some 1,500 Cisco 7960G IP Phones were deployed in 50 buildings across the SP campus. This was completed in September 2002.

New services

The benefits of a converged network were immediate and obvious - operating costs were estimated to have fallen by at least 10 to 30 per cent. Also, it was easier to support and manage the converged network, which can be centralised and simplified.

From a user perspective, there is a whole new world of services.

'Our staff, teaching faculty and students can now access useful information from anywhere using a variety of IP-enabled devices. The network has made possible new value-added services we could not have introduced on a digital PABX system.'

'For example, we can text broadcast urgent messages to all 1,500 Cisco IP Phones simultaneously. They can also be used for SMS or booking taxis or even getting weather information.'

'Basically, a lot of the Internet information that our staff used to access only via their PCs can now be accessed with their IP phones,' he said.



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