

## Providing **personalised** Voice and Data Management with **Cisco IP Telephony**

A me-too approach to voice and data networking in the serviced property market could quickly prove fatal.

In a market where clients range from multi-nationals to sole traders – each of which expects enterprise levels of service-the first and only voice and data integrated system operating today in the UK is based on Cisco's AVVID (Architecture for Voice, Video and Integrated Data).

From personalised answering services, to unified messaging and voice over IP to billing dozens of different clients, while saving on the cabling, Cisco AVVID is the unique solution to a unique set of problems.

### **Company:**

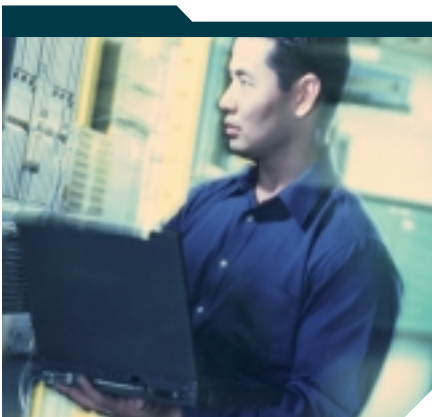
Asmec is a fast growing managed service office provider with business centres in Theale, near Reading and Bracknell, Berkshire, in the heart of England's M4 corridor, home to many high tech and telecoms companies.

Opened in 2001, the Theale centre is Asmec's newest investment and the company knew tenants would be impressed with the latest state of the art voice and data communications infrastructure.

As construction of the building continued during Winter of 2000 / 2001 Asmec, which had initially planned to opt for a traditional PBX for telephony and a standard data network installation, found something better.

By February 2001, Cisco channel partner Voyager was working closely with Asmec. Voyager worked tirelessly to ensure that all of Asmec's questions were answered and that the functionality of AVVID system in areas such as personalised call answering could be guaranteed. This was achieved using consoles from London based company ARC, now a standard Cisco offering in configurations such as those rolled out at the Asmec building.

Despite the initial consideration of a standard PBX, once IP Telephony came into the equation and the advantages grasped, Asmec found that all other IP PBX offerings either failed to guarantee functionality and service or were simply vapourware.





‘Voyager put a lot of effort to prove that it would work and it was very important to us that we offer the latest technology to our client base,’ says Martin Janes, IT and Telecoms manager at Asmec.

Asmec planned for the Theale premises to provide everything from fully serviced office suites to virtual office space and a networked café. Services needed to include everything from personalised telephone answering to video conferencing facilities.

By the very nature of its business however, this meant achieving high levels of service in an environment consisting of many different companies, each with specific needs and requiring different levels of functionality.

Cisco AVVID delivered the necessary Intelligent Infrastructure, IP Telephony, unified messaging and security.

### **Advantages**

For Asmec, being able to differentiate itself from its rivals means the ability to deliver bespoke communications services to its tenants, while avoiding the higher maintenance and management costs traditionally associated with dealing with separate voice and data network providers.

As a serviced office provider Asmec’s other primary concerns also related to how it could market its building to potential clients.

Once these considerations were understood it became obvious that Cisco AVVID technology was the only one capable of delivering a converged network while guaranteeing service and functionality associated with traditional PBXs.

‘Our clients, whether they are large divisions of multi-national corporates or smaller businesses can be offered enterprise level infrastructure. From a marketing perspective it is very important for us to offer this to existing and potential clients. Although we were a little apprehensive about it, we felt that only an IP Telephony based system would give us the cachet we needed,’ says Janes.

As the first UK installation of an IP Telephony system in a managed office environment, the Asmec building has received a lot of interest from many visitors keen to observe the latest technology in situ in a multi-client environment.

### **AVVID Technology**

‘Cisco was the only vendor offering a converged solution based upon a single converged infrastructure.’

Janes first observation is that there have been huge advantages on the management side. This combined with an installation that went ‘surprisingly well’ has added to the satisfaction rating with the system

Much of the configuration work was done off-site and although Asmec originally factored in 2 weeks for the installation and then 2 weeks for testing, issues unrelated to the network meant the installation was conducted over 10 days. It was then available for use the day after completion, which was fortunate for the Asmec client that needed voice and data communications that very day.

A converged network meant that Asmec could have opted to save money on the cabling but instead it opted to press ahead with its original plans to enable greater scalability for the future. Each desk has four ports with the fifth extra port available in each room. Cisco’s AVVID also means future advantages such as rapid deployment of telephones and applications.

‘We needed to provide 10/100 Ethernet to the desktop and we can do that.’

Another huge advantage was the unique inline power supply of Cisco handset’s meaning in the event of a power outage the phones will continue to work as per a traditional PBX,’ said Janes.

From an extensive list, among the equipment supplied included two Media Conference Servers, Cisco Call Manager software, 300 Cisco IP telephones, Mind Computer Telephony 500 user billing software, one 16 Port Unity Server for active voice unified messaging and an ARC operator console service and three clients for personalised telephone answering.

Richard Brown, of Cisco channel partner Voyager, says ‘Most companies use 5-10 features of a typical AVVID system, but because of the nature of a managed office with its diverse range of commercial organisations all under one roof, the challenge was to ensure the availability of the different functions to the different companies. We also had to consider the impact of computer telephony integration. One of the tenants of the building is an outbound call centre which has 40 people hammering the system with outgoing calls.’



### Service

Janes says the service received from Cisco and from its channel partner Voyager was exemplary. 'Both were genuinely interested in the issues we had and worked hard to understand the problems that a multi-tenant environment would bring,' he says.

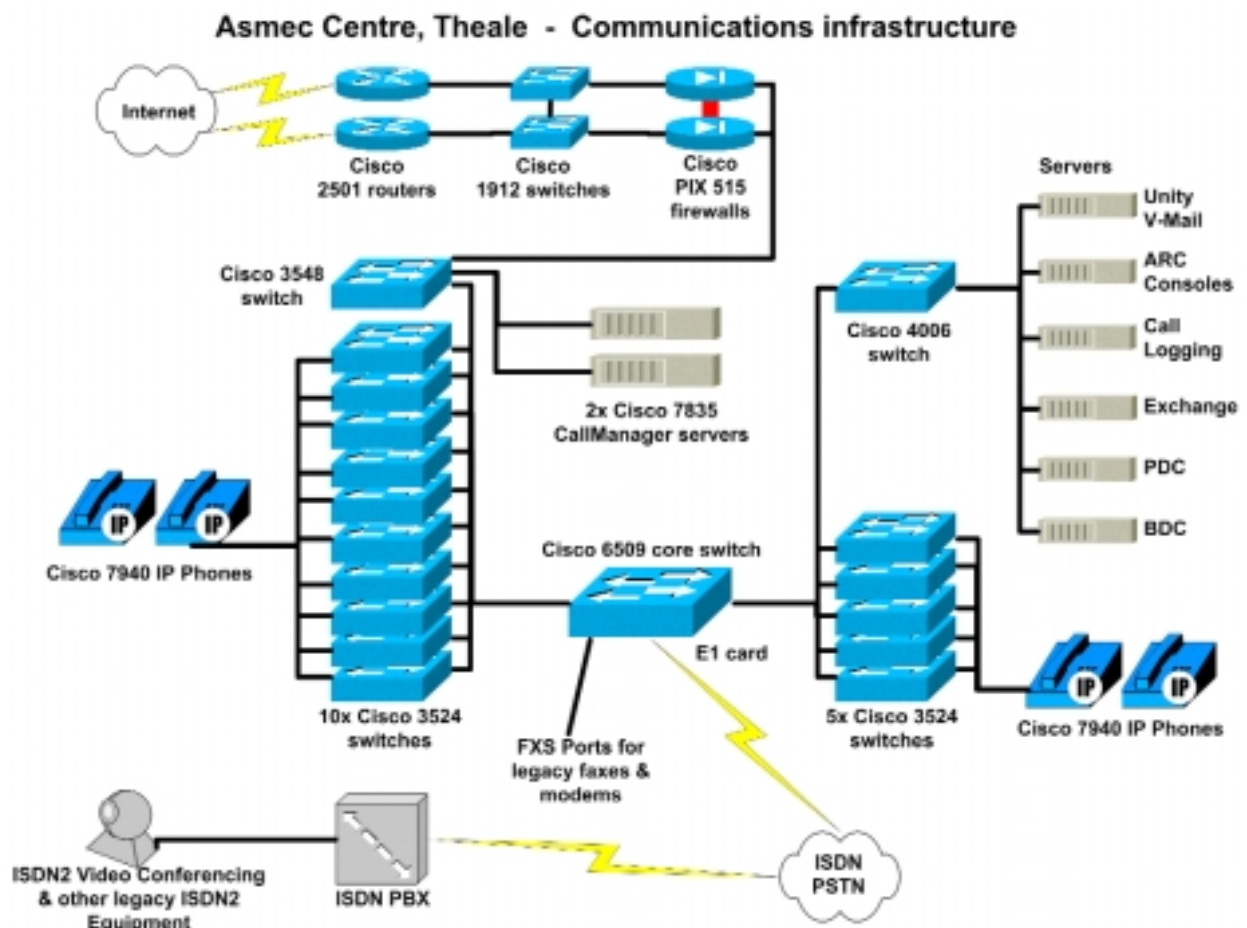
### The Future

Although unique in the UK in its conception and execution the network has so far proved robust and reliable, with call connection rates, quality of service, security and networking services easily matching those of standard separate networks. The AVVID architecture also means easy deployment of new applications and 2002 will see the rolling out of the full unified messaging service across the whole building.

For the future, Asmec is exploring the possibility of things such as long distance calls over the web. For example this would work as a service for the UK subsidiaries of US companies. Today it costs around 18p per minute to call the US via a traditional carrier, but if those calls can be routed over the internet, then Asmec can substantially cut tenant's call charges while retaining a good margin.

### Conclusion

Building from the ground up is something that Asmec knows about. But with various clients, each with a variety of unique demands, it knows Cisco AVVID has provided a solid communications foundation.



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