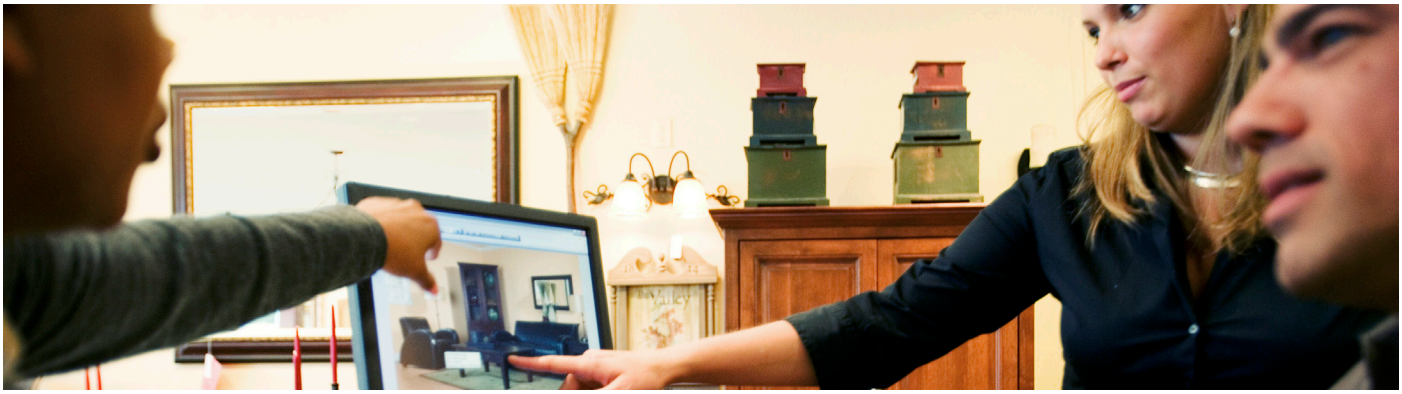

SEAT unveils the innovation campus

SEAT chooses an integrated architectural approach using the best collaboration, mobility, security and data center solutions for the new Turin office. Thanks to the efforts of Cisco and Pres (the partner which handled the project) innovation is confirmed as essential to the development of the business.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer name

SEAT Pagine Gialle

Location

Turin, Italy

Industry

Multimedia profiled advertising

Business challenge

- Enable systems to facilitate collaboration and communication in the new Turin office, in which all the offices previously spread across various sites have been brought together
- Make the network the platform for added-value services so that employees can work effectively and productively
- Encourage employee availability and secure access to the network in all the company's indoor and outdoor environments
- Provide the agents who work remotely with secure, high performance access to corporate tools
- Centralise the Data Centers of the former offices on the new campus
- Adequately support the exponential growth of video traffic on the corporate network

With a history spanning more than 80 years, SEAT Pagine Gialle has won deserved plaudits as a true enabler of relationships. Today, in the Web 2.0 era, SEAT provides the only multimedia platform in Europe with mutually-integrated tools for information search and communication. This is based on a value that is deeply-rooted within the company's propensity for innovation, where the network takes on strategic value for business, research and development. The starting point is an integrated internal infrastructure in which data, voice, video (and all related devices) co-exist on a single platform. Today, SEAT's network is a borderless nerve centre. It allows collaboration and communication tools to bring life to a modern, advanced working environment, in which the concepts of workstation, devices used and location have assumed unprecedented significance. The network offers services with no limits, both in terms of potential and geography, creating new business models driven by its own main characteristics of flexibility, reliability, scalability, mobility and security. This leads to an overall improvement in productivity.

Pagine Gialle - where visibility has its own special colour

SEAT Pagine Gialle Group is one of the major international operators in the multimedia profiled advertising sector. The company has a diversified range on offer (print, telephone, internet), which includes hi-tech products for the web and for satellite and ortophotometric navigation, as well as complementary communication services such as one-to-one marketing.

Pagine Gialle offers information services, availability and communication tools through one of the best-known brands among both households and companies. This success is underpinned by a sales network of more than 2000 people, technology which is constantly evolving, a database of 15 million households and 3.8 million economic operators and a vast product range able to ensure the availability of a truly-integrated communication "system" to around 600 thousand customers in Italy. The results achieved by SEAT in 2007 speak for themselves: 65 million volumes distributed in homes and offices, 35 million directory assistance calls and more than 340 million visits to its internet directory; a true platform able to match people to companies and requirements to solutions, as well as to encourage economic transactions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cisco solutions

- Wired and Wireless Network
- Unified Communications
- NAC
- Data Center - ACE
- WAAS Mobile

Business value

- Strong increase in productivity and optimisation of the workforce's time
- High level of collaboration and total employee availability thanks to the integration of IP Phones, PCs and mobile devices
- Enabling of detailed and high-level network security policies
- Remote network performance and security equivalent to that available in the office
- Use of advanced video services on the IP network

SEAT has recently completed a project to transfer its 5 Turin offices (across which the Group's offices were previously spread) into a single headquarters. This was achieved by converting the former premises of Officine Savigliano (Savigliano Workshops) in Turin, which were subject to a successful architectural restoration. The technology infrastructure was rebuilt from scratch and this inspired SEAT to implement a new ICT architecture based on Cisco solutions. This was a wide-ranging project in which the contribution of Pres – the Cisco partner which handled all phases of the implementation – was critical. The result is an impressive new technology platform inspired by the principles of the Cisco Borderless Network, capable of supporting telephony and collaboration, mobility, data center and video systems with high levels of performance, flexibility and security. It is also able to integrate with existing applications and services, with everything scaled for an organisation consisting of 1,300 employees and 2,000 agents spread across Italy, with offices located in several subsidiaries in other Italian cities. This occurs in a setting in which innovation and technology architectures are an essential enabler of the company's core business. It is a project that is unique in scale, where the synergies between Cisco, Pres and the ICT staff of SEAT have needed to flourish in unison.

Collaboration allows the working environment to function

The first step was to decide whether to migrate the infrastructure provided or move to a new one. The integration of the 5 offices into a single building in fact created an opportunity to discard equipment that was clearly obsolete by creating a new platform to achieve long-term objectives. This was above all a strategic choice: make the network the platform to provide value-added communication and collaboration services, able to provide employees with a new way of working. "We had already embarked on the migration path from traditional telephony towards VoIP, by replacing the PABX switchboards with Cisco Unified Call Manager", asserts Fabio Cuneaz, Technology Architecture and Security Projects Manager within the Information Technology and Processes Department of SEAT Pagine Gialle. "This path was completed by providing staff with a Cisco Unified Communications solution, where IP telephones and PCs are perfectly integrated and complementary".

The flexibility of the solutions put into action means it is now possible for around 900 SEAT employees to use computers and fixed and mobile telephones for controlling calls, as well as to use voice mail services, keep track of lost calls and benefit from other innovative functions. "The integration of Cisco Unified Communications has generated a significant increase in productivity and allowed us to optimise our colleagues' time", adds Gianfranco Ardissono, Chief Technology Officer at SEAT Pagine Gialle. "Staff can now be reached anywhere in the company because the integration of computers with Cisco solutions and mobile devices like smartphones generates unlimited benefits and helps to achieve complete collaboration".

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And it doesn't end there. The option to manage telephone stations like network devices and allow access via log-in has made the planning of staff availability at the new offices during the relocation phase superfluous. "This aspect has made a difference because it has saved us extra activities in the project phase. All we had to do was configure the access credentials so that every user can now use any workstation indiscriminately". Benefits have also accrued as a result of the Cisco solution's integration with tools already present within the SEAT technology range. The SEAT strategy is now to extend the integration of Cisco Unified Communications into 12 satellite offices, a project which will again be handled by Pres. As Cuneaz goes on to say: "As well as integrating the centralised services across all our subsidiaries - thereby extending the benefits of collaboration to the entire organisation - we could also substantially reduce management costs by enabling ourselves centrally instead of having to take action to perform maintenance interventions on the spot". Savings were in any event ensured from the outset: the use of a centrally-managed single infrastructure for voice and data had already provided a return on investment, generated from deactivation of the former primary telephone lines.

Borderless Network: borderless thanks to secure mobility

It is now a fact: "collaboration" tools combined with mobility solutions produce an exponential increase in service functions and the resulting accrued benefits for companies. That is why Cisco mobility solutions played a leading role in the design of the new SEAT ICT infrastructure, starting from the wireless network in the new office. The seven buildings that make up the new SEAT Turin campus have therefore implemented Cisco wireless technology which allows the company to provide new levels of freedom and increase operational efficiency. As Ardissono makes clear: "We decided to invest in total coverage of our offices and common areas through a wireless network, something that is essential for a campus organisation like ours. This provides employees, guests, clients and consultants with access to network resources and availability even when using voice and mobile data devices, both indoors and outdoors in the transit areas".

It was also important to have centralised management functions, since SEAT's previous structure was made up of independent Access Points which needed to be individually configured. "We chose a system which could be centrally administered, partly also due to the management features of radio channels that are optimised for fluid roaming functionality between the coverage areas for every single Access Point. This ensures maximum reliability in using Wireless IP phones to obtain unprecedented communication quality". The same chosen Access Point models - the Cisco Aironet 1250 Series (certified 802.11n draft 2.0) - are capable of managing heavy traffic like video data by maintaining superior performance capability combined with high security levels.

In fact, the security factor always makes a difference where wireless is concerned, as Matteo Masera (Pres Sales Director) emphasises. "The internal and external network architecture at the SEAT campus has made it essential to use a Cisco Network Admission Control (NAC) solution. To address the requirements for internal mobility and the strong temporary access component, Cisco NAC allows guest users to be identified, recorded and channelled into a separate section of the network". Hence we go from security to Advanced Security: Cisco NAC in fact radically changes the approach to security insofar as it allows for the definition and adoption of detailed security policies, which can be transformed into rules that are systematically and universally applicable across the whole network. This allows secure access to the network at any point, by any means and at any time.

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Thanks to the borderless network, SEAT is increasing the productivity of the Group's remote agents. There are 2000 resources spread over the national territory who need to use applications and services present on the corporate network with the same reliability and performance enjoyed by employees who work in the head office. Masera from Pres gives a more in-depth look at the implementation of a Cisco Wide Area Application Services (WAAS) solution. "SEAT needed accelerated distribution of the application component both into satellite offices and for the benefit of agents who connect remotely. Thanks to the Cisco WAAS mobile solution, agents are now able to benefit from better connection performance in relation to the Data Center where the information is stored".

It is no coincidence then that the mobile WAAS project developed within SEAT is highly innovative and represents one of the most extensive examples in the world. "A new and highly-developed CRM system has recently been released to the salesforce", adds Cuneaz. "This provides advanced functionality for all phases of their activity, from visit preparation to offer formulation and order management and processing. It is a completely on-line system which would have generated high operational costs with the guaranteed-bandwidth ADSL connection provided to agents. The results are exciting and we are witnessing remote performance comparable to the levels achieved in a local network, with latency reduced by almost 90%". The Group has therefore also migrated the connection type, opting for UMTC cards on portable PCs and providing its own remote operators with a reliable, secure system which allows for a significant cost reduction. This solution has therefore also been extended to all employees in the office who have been provided with laptop PCs to generate a significant increase in efficiency, even in areas with poor wireless coverage.

Cisco Data Center: innovation underpinning services

Last but certainly not least, there is the issue of migration and centralisation at the new Data Center headquarters, which in the case of SEAT Pagine Gialle forms the heart of all the ICT infrastructure. The new Data Center has also been planned and created with the support of Pres using Cisco technology. "We carried out a gradual relocation beginning with the front-end servers of the former Data Center and extending the LAN network towards the new Data Center", clarifies Cuneaz. "In this phase the use of stackable Cisco 3750 Switches was invaluable and allowed us to complete the work in around a month".

Migration involved a good 710 servers and 78 technology cabinets, and was completed through the transfer of racks, following a rule that 50% of the service must always remain active. Cisco Catalyst 6500 Switches were therefore chosen for the new core infrastructure, allowing benefit to be drawn from the integration of advanced services, including security and wireless LAN for distribution of content into convergent networks. The Catalyst 6500 Switches implemented by SEAT include the Application Control Engine (ACE) module, a solution which allows for consolidation of the load balance and allocation of basic resources on the basis of partition as well as access control based on role.

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Video on IP: innovation goes live

The new Cisco infrastructure is based on the main market standards and has at last allowed the integration of various digital video content distribution systems, as Ardissono points out. "The network grants us use of a Digital Signage system for the creation of, management and access to digital content, using live and on-demand video broadcasting functionality". The video content is distributed by the IP network and shown on LCD displays located in several key points within the new head office. SEAT is today able to support the exponential growth of video traffic thanks to Cisco solutions, which have allowed the implementation of new applications in the corporate network, like satellite TV to broadcast finance news and updates to 50 senior managers within the company.

The network's potential in the context of digital video is also being exploited through a video-surveillance system: digital video cameras connected to the IP network provide maximum flexibility and high performance, as well as an option for central and independent management of an entire physical security system from the station being used, resulting in further cost reduction.

The partnership between Cisco and Pres makes all the difference

Satisfaction for the technology and the skills deployed by Cisco and Pres is high on all fronts. "We have always compared various solutions to find the performance, security and cost levels most suited to our requirements", concludes Ardissono. "The choice has always been Cisco, whose solutions have stood out because they provide greater functionality than others and offer the best quality-price relationship. When the project began we had to decide whether to simply re-use what we had already or create a new infrastructure which would have supported us for 10 or 15 years, not only in terms of technology but also from all other perspectives. We wanted a technologically-advanced infrastructure that would last for years to come". The investment made by SEAT has allowed them to achieve excellent levels of efficiency, as well as reducing the new infrastructure's maintenance and management costs. This assessment is in line with the judgement of Cisco's partner Pres. "Cisco as a technology partner pays a lot of attention to our requirements and operates in a very timely manner. It is one of the suppliers with which we have the best relationship". Pres has also been responsible for the entire area of device configuration, working in a project that forms an unprecedented success story.

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