Manufacturer Unifies Workforce and Enhances Customer Interactions

Pella Corporation increased customer-service levels and internal collaboration using WebEx, Jabber, and Unified Contact Center.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Pella Corporation
Industry: Manufacturing
Location: Pella, Iowa
Number of Employees: 8600 Employees

CHALLENGE

- Maintain people-centric culture as enterprise grows
- Increase customer satisfaction with contact center experience
- Simplify IT

SOLUTION

- Simplified collaboration by standardizing on Cisco WebEx and Cisco Jabber solutions
- Enabled contact center managers to manage service quality using Cisco Unified Workforce Optimization for Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
- Centralized monitoring of video surveillance cameras from multiple vendors with Cisco Video Surveillance Manager

RESULTS

- Optimized team performance by encouraging collaboration
- Increased customer satisfaction ratings by more than five percentage points
- Lowered data center space, power, and cooling costs by using cloud-based conferencing service

Challenge

Founded in 1925 as the Rolscreen Company, Pella Corporation today offers a broad range of quality residential and commercial windows and doors for new construction and remodeling projects. Over time, the company has expanded to 65 U.S. locations, including show rooms, branches, and manufacturing sites.

“We are a family-owned business, and we’ve worked hard to maintain our people-focused culture as we expanded geographically,” says Jim Thomas, director of IT operations at Pella Corporation. The IT team introduced many collaboration applications over the years, including videoconferencing, on-premises and hosted audio bridges, on-premises and hosted web conferencing, and instant messaging.

“The irony was that employees faced too many choices,” says John McConeghey, IT manager for Pella. Some chose the wrong technology for their purposes, scheduling a web conference when they did not need to share presentations, or a videoconference when the main purpose was reviewing a customer presentation, for example. “We decided to simplify internal collaboration by consolidating to fewer applications, each one great at fulfilling a particular business need,” McConeghey says. The IT team sought best-in-class applications to optimize team performance and deliver a high-quality contact center experience. A related effort was to simplify video surveillance infrastructure and processes at headquarters.

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Solution

Pella succeeded in simplifying collaboration by standardizing on Cisco® solutions. “We had confidence in Cisco’s long-term stability and its commitment to integrate with other solutions that we might adopt in the future,” says McConeghey. The solutions help Pella stay at the top of its industry in the following ways:

- **Team Collaboration:** Pella employees in any location can join an audio, high-definition (HD) video, and web sharing conference using Cisco WebEx® Meetings, a cloud web-conferencing service. In headquarters conference rooms, the company uses pan-tilt-zoom cameras to create a better group video experience. Mobile employees can join the meeting from a smartphone or tablet using the Cisco WebEx Mobile application. “Using a cloud-based service instead of on-premises servers avoids capital and operational costs for on-premises servers,” Thomas says.
- **Customer Collaboration and Quality Management:** Pella delivers a quality experience in its 12 contact centers for sales and service by using Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise and Express. “We view the Cisco solution as a strategic platform, connecting customers to qualified agents in any site,” says John Baldwin, Pella’s network and security manager. Customers appreciate the self-service option for checking order status, made possible by Cisco Unified IP Interactive Voice Response (IVR). Contact center managers work to continually improve quality by recording and scoring calls and optimizing staffing levels, using Cisco Unified Workforce Optimization tools.
- **Presence and Instant Messaging:** Approximately 4000 Pella employees use Cisco WebEx Messenger (formerly WebEx Connect) to see which coworkers are available and then just click to connect with instant messaging, voice, or a WebEx meeting. The company is beginning to transition to Cisco Jabber™ as its unified communications client application on desktop and mobile devices. “We’re adopting a BYOD [bring your own device] policy, and Cisco Jabber operates on the wide variety of personal devices that Pella employees use, including desktops, laptops, iPads, and Android tablets,” says McConeghey. Pella’s previous presence and instant messaging software worked only on Windows desktop computers.
- **Mobility:** Most employees use Cisco Unified IP Phones 7900 Series. Mobile employees, such as shop floor workers in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, are beginning to use Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones 7925 to place and receive calls at their usual number without having to go back to their desks. “It’s a cultural value at Pella for managers to spend time engaging with their team members instead of working from their offices, and Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones and Cisco mobile apps like WebEx and Jabber support that value,” says Thomas.
- **Video Surveillance:** Physical security staff at Pella’s one-million-square-foot corporate headquarters site can now centrally monitor live and recorded feeds from approximately 25 IP video surveillance cameras, using Cisco Video Surveillance Manager. The cameras are from Cisco as well as other vendors. “If we’re running data everywhere, why not run IP cameras on top of same infrastructure,” Baldwin says. “Carrying video surveillance on the same Cisco network we use for data, voice, and collaboration applications increases the value of the network.”

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Results

Optimized Team Performance by Simplifying Collaboration

When Pella provided multiple collaboration applications that served the same purpose, employees were uncertain about which tool to use. “Now that we’ve standardized on Cisco collaboration applications, employees spend less time thinking about their technology choices and more time collaborating to develop innovative products and provide a great customer experience,” says McConeghey. “Cisco collaboration is a cornerstone of our strategy for preserving our family-oriented culture as the company continues to grow.”

> “It’s a cultural value at Pella for managers to spend time engaging with their team members instead of working from their offices, and Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones support that value.”
> **— Jim Thomas, Director of IT Operations, Pella**

Increased Customer Satisfaction

To continually improve the quality of customer interactions, contact center managers use Cisco Unified Workforce Optimization tools to record contact center conversations. “Customer service is very important to our business, and we use the recordings to enforce processes like greeting and thanking customers and gathering all critical information,” Baldwin says. Customer satisfaction ratings increased for the contact center increased by more than five percentage points after the company began using Cisco Workforce Optimization tools. “After we migrated our contact center to Cisco Unified Contact Center, the quality improvement was so noticeable that several customers actually commented on the improvement,” says Baldwin.

Pella also uses the workforce optimization tools to appropriately staff the contact center on different days of the week and seasons. The tool helped managers realize, for example, that call volume everywhere in the country is highest on Mondays, and that a lull in calls during adverse weather is generally followed by a spike in calls as weekends approach or weather permits outside projects.

Simplified IT

Finally, standardizing on Cisco solutions is increasing business agility by helping the IT team rapidly introduce new capabilities to meet evolving business needs. “We’re a nimble company, and Cisco helps us stay that way because the solutions are easy to implement,” says Lynn Starkey, network architect at Pella. “The same size IT team has been able to support growth for seven years.” In addition, deploying the Cisco applications as virtual machines on the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) lowers data center space, power, cooling, and management requirements.

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Next Steps

Pella continues to look for new ways to enhance collaboration within employee teams and with customers. For example, the IT team is preparing for BYOD by introducing Cisco Jabber, which works on any popular device and operating system, and by implementing security controls. Cisco Identity Services Engine (ISE), which Pella already uses, gives the IT team the confidence to offer a BYOD option, because it can enforce different access policies depending on who is asking, the device and network connection, and location.

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> **— John McConeghey, IT Manager, Pella Corporation**

The company is also conducting a pilot with Cisco TelePresence® endpoints. The plan is to offer this option when employees need an in-person experience, as they might for critical business meetings with suppliers.

In the contact center, Pella is thinking about adding email and web chat options, using Cisco Unified E-Mail Interaction Manager and Web Interaction Manager.

Technical Implementation

"The Cisco architecture lends itself to a highly available and survivable environment," says Baldwin. Cisco Unified Communications Manager and the Cisco collaboration applications are deployed as virtual machines on two Cisco UCS chassis. For business continuity, one chassis is in Pella's data center in Iowa, and the other in an out-of-state collocation facility. All sites connect over a Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) network and many use a 4G network for business continuity if the network goes down.

Almost all sites connect to the service provider over two centralized Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) trunks, terminated by the Cisco Unified Border Element (CUBE) on Cisco Integrated Services Routers (ISRs). The only calls that do not flow across the SIP trunks are internal calls and toll-free calls. "Centralized SIP trunking has dramatically reduced support requirements," says Baldwin. When the company switched from time-division multiplexing (TDM) trunking to SIP trunking, connectivity charges decreased by approximately 60 percent.

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> **— John Baldwin, Network and Security Manager, Pella Corporation**

The IT team takes a network-based approach to security. "We don't have the resources to design security for individual applications, so we use Cisco security solutions to protect all traffic flowing over the network," says Baldwin. The company uses Cisco ISE for context-based enforcement of policy, Cisco ASA Adaptive Security Appliance, and Cisco Wireless Control System.

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PRODUCT LIST
Unified Communications
Cisco Unified Communications Manager
Cisco Unified IP Phones 7900 Series
Cisco Unity® Connection
Customer Collaboration
Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise for 65-agent contact center
Cisco Unified Contact Center Express for smaller contact centers
Cisco Unified Workforce Optimization
Cisco Unified IP Interactive Voice Response
Cisco Agent Desktop
Collaboration Applications
Cisco WebEx Meetings
Cisco WebEx Mobile
Cisco WebEx Messenger (formerly WebEx Connect)
Cisco Jabber
TelePresence
Cisco TelePresence Systems EX60 and MX200 (pilot)
Physical Security
Cisco Video Surveillance Manager
Data Center
Cisco Unified Computing System (Cisco UCS) B-Series Blade Servers

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Collaboration, visit: http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation.

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