Law Firm Increases Client Service Level and Value

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer name: Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC
Industry: Legal
Location: Charleston, West Virginia
Number of employees: 300

Challenge
- Support excellence in client service and day-to-day operations
- Increase client value
- Achieve business continuity goals

Solution
- Enhanced collaboration across seven offices by implementing centralized Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco collaboration applications
- Simplified IT infrastructure by implementing applications on Cisco Unified Computing System and FlexPod infrastructure

Results
- Improved responsiveness by giving attorneys and staff more collaboration options
- Lowered data center costs for communications and collaboration
- Helped to ensure business continuity with resilient architecture

Challenge
Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC is a full-service law firm with 300 employees, including approximately 145 attorneys. Established in 1864, the firm now has seven offices, in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Virginia. “We’ve earned a reputation for providing excellent client service and operating as an extension of our clients’ management team,” says Dustin Davies, the firm’s chief technology officer. “We also strive to provide exceptional value, which means we work to keep operational costs down.”

Learning that the existing voice system would no longer be supported, the firm decided to look for a communications solution that would help attorneys provide exceptional client service, while also increasing operational efficiency. “In many multi-office law firms, attorneys in different offices can’t easily collaborate on cases and truly share expertise,” Davies says. “We saw an opportunity to apply advanced collaboration technology to meet our goals for excellence in client service as well as day-to-day operations. Our vision was bringing together attorneys in all seven offices to work as one firm.”

To simplify IT infrastructure and management, the firm wanted a centralized communications and collaboration solution that would serve all offices.

Solution
Spilman achieved its goals by implementing Cisco® Unified Communications Manager and Cisco collaboration applications on Cisco Unified Computing System™ (Cisco UCS®). “We liked the idea of working with one vendor for our collaboration applications, data center platform, and the underlying wired and wireless networks,” Davies says.
MCPC, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner, implemented the Cisco solutions in a third-party data center. The seven offices need no equipment other than a Cisco Integrated Services Router (ISR) and phones. “The transition to Cisco Unified Communications on Cisco UCS proceeded very smoothly, without disrupting communications,” Davies says.

Attorneys and staff use Cisco Unified IP Phones 9971, which have large, high-definition color displays that add video to the conversation. When the firm’s attorneys work at another office or travel, they can place and receive calls to their office phone number using Cisco Jabber™ on their Apple iPhones and iPads. To date, about 50 attorneys use Jabber, which also lets them see which colleagues are available, click to send instant messages, and click to dial.

In addition, attorneys can get back to clients sooner using Cisco Unity® Connection, which lets them manage and play back voicemail messages from their email inboxes instead of repeatedly dialing in to check voicemail throughout the day. “Having just one place to check for email and voicemail helps us find out about and respond to issues more quickly,” Davies says.

To help make sure that employees’ hardware or software issues do not interrupt work, Spilman uses Cisco Unified Contact Center Express to route internal help-desk calls to an available IT staff member. If the first person does not answer a call, the solution redirects the call to another qualified staff member. “The ability to route help-desk calls helps us make sure that our people get help when needed so that they can stay productive,” says Davies.

Results
The new Cisco collaboration capabilities support Spilman’s commitment to service excellence and client value by increasing responsiveness and IT efficiency.

Increased Responsiveness
Spilman’s attorneys frequently work from offices other than the home office, and now they can be reached easily no matter where they are. “With Cisco Jabber, we can answer calls from clients and exchange instant messages with colleagues from any of our offices,” says Davies. “Increased mobility and flexibility can also improve quality of life for our lawyers and staff.”

Increased IT Efficiency
The new centralized IT infrastructure increases operational efficiency. Rather than deploying and managing a separate server for each Cisco application, the firm operates the applications as virtual servers on a compact Cisco UCS. “Moving to Cisco UCS enabled us to consolidate our communications and collaboration infrastructure from seven racks to two racks,” says Davies. “That’s a 71 percent reduction in IT infrastructure and data center space requirements, and it also lowers power and cooling costs.”

Further increasing efficiency, Spilman can now add new collaboration applications, and add or subtract application licenses, as business needs change. “The pay-as-you-go model in Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing gives us tremendous flexibility and peace of mind,” Davies says. A SMARTnet® Service contract provides 24-hour access to experts in the Cisco Technical Assistance Center, as well as self-help resources.
Davies concludes, “Cisco is a trusted advisor and its product roadmap helps us make sure that none of our investments are stranded capital. Knowing that Cisco has a coherent plan for the future helps me sleep at night.”

Next Steps
Spilman will increase the value of its investment in Cisco Unified Communications by adding new capabilities. For example, the firm is adding Cisco WebEx® Meetings Server to bring video to the desktop and enable attorneys and clients in different locations to collaborate on documents.

To help make sure that clients and attorneys can continue to communicate if a line goes down, Spilman plans to take advantage of Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) support in Cisco Unified Communications Manager. Replacing the existing primary rate interface (PRI) lines with a SIP connection will increase resiliency while also lowering costs.

Technical Implementation
The Cisco partner, MCPC, implemented the Cisco collaboration applications on Cisco UCS C-Series Rack Servers. Later, MCPC deployed FlexPod, which combines Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers and NetApp storage, to host the firm’s other virtualized business applications. Although the previous servers were relatively new, performance had declined noticeably as the firm virtualized more applications. “We were able to justify the switch from a relatively new server platform to FlexPod infrastructure because of its smaller footprint and higher performance for virtualized applications. The density of FlexPod, the number of servers we can operate on each blade, is unmatched,” Davies says.

Product List
• Unified communications
  - Cisco Unified Communications Manager
  - Cisco Unified IP Phones 9971

• Collaboration
  - Cisco Jabber
  - Cisco Unity Connection
  - Cisco Contact Center Express

• Data center
  - Cisco Unified Computing System for Cisco communications and collaboration applications
  - FlexPod for other business applications

• Wireless
  - Cisco Aironet® 3600 Series Wireless Access Points
  - Cisco 5500 Series Wireless Control System

“We were able to justify the switch from a relatively new server platform to FlexPod infrastructure because of its smaller footprint and higher performance for virtualized applications. The density of FlexPod, the number of servers we can operate on each blade, is unmatched.”

Dustin Davies
Chief Technology Officer
Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC
More Information

• To learn more about Cisco Collaboration, visit: www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.
• To learn more about Cisco Unified Communications, visit: www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications.
• To learn more about Cisco Data Center, visit: www.cisco.com/go/datacenter.
• To learn more about Cisco Wireless, visit: www.cisco.com/go/wireless.
• To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation.
• To learn more about Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC, visit: www.spilmanlaw.com.