Collaboration key to new business wins for engineering multinational

"Collaborating with staff and clients across key global markets has significantly boosted productivity, saved on operational overheads, allowed us to account for costs and helped us win vital new projects."

– Barry Honey, Senior Infrastructure Architect, Aurecon

The Aurecon Group is a global engineering and management consultancy spanning 28 countries across Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. Created from a merger in 2009 of three companies – Africon, Connell Wagner and Ninham Shand – the group, with a global staff of 6,000, provides a broad range of multidisciplinary technical services, expertise and project management.

Critical business issue

Without a centralised communications system in place, Aurecon's staff relied on a combination of email and hosted audio and video conferencing services to communicate and collaborate with clients and colleagues across the company's global office network.

"Our communications set-up was difficult to use," says Barry Honey, Senior Infrastructure Architect, Aurecon. "It was expensive to maintain, due to the high cost of the hosting services and the support staff we needed to manage our unique environment.

"We were financing numerous systems but the conferencing services were barely used. Most staff didn't know they existed and we didn't actively promote them because they weren't reliable or effectively supported."

Aurecon's business objective

Aurecon wanted to build a unified communications environment that provided a common experience across its global network, which would enable staff and clients to communicate and collaborate effectively with each other.

The capabilities Cisco brought to Aurecon

Aurecon planned to introduce Microsoft Office Communications Server to its existing Cisco network, which included firewalls, switches and routers. The initial deployment was limited to the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand, with a view to rolling out the solution to Africa and the Middle East in the longer term.

However, given the company's crucial need to communicate globally across all major time zones, Aurecon looked for ways to ensure its new communications system operated faultlessly around the clock.

"We needed 100 percent network availability," explains Honey. "So rather than putting all the responsibility of our communications in one location, we saw that balancing the load across the network was a better option."

To ensure the reliability of its communications, the company chose Cisco's Application Control Engine Module to balance switching workloads across the network.

"Previously we couldn't offer any guarantees about how our communications would perform," says Honey. "With Cisco Application Control Engine, we can guarantee our staff and clients 100 percent network availability so they can always conduct video, audio or web-based meetings."

The outcome for Aurecon

1. Common communications experience

With Cisco Application Control Engine deployed to load balance Aurecon's new communications network, the company now provides uniform communications capabilities to its Asia-Pacific workforce.

"Our staff now know they have communication tools at their fingertips," says Honey. "This ensures improvements in the way our offices communicate and collaborate with one another, and how staff interact with existing and potential clients."

2. Increased productivity through improved collaboration

Aurecon's new communications system, with around-the-clock availability, has resulted in improved staff productivity.

"From an internal point of view, staff now share desktops, CAD drawings and electronic documents and monitor changes across divisions as well as markets," says Honey. "This promotes a dynamic virtual workspace rather than a static meeting room. Collaboration is the key. We can tap into skills, projects and resources in any of our offices."

Using the same tools to collaborate with clients has led to similar improvements in productivity. "We can be more productive with feedback; instead of going back and forth with clients, we receive more immediate responses, enabling us to achieve a speedier resolution and better outcome," says Honey.

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3. Reduced management costs

The new, centralised communications set-up has made it possible to assign costs to individual projects. Aurecon could also bill these costs to clients, if it chose to. "By centralising our costs, we can see how much each project is costing us per day, per month, per year," explains Honey.

This financial transparency has led Aurecon to save on its operational overheads. "The money we save can be invested into future projects," he says. "We can do more and we can do it more efficiently."

4. Greater profitability

Aurecon's productivity gains have helped it win important new business in overseas markets.

"Our improved ability to communicate and collaborate across different markets and time zones has enabled us to produce a better quality of work and tackle projects as a single, global firm," he adds.

"The better we can collaborate 24 hours a day on these international projects with our clients, the more work we are going to win across global markets."

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Cisco Application Control Engine Module
Cisco ASA 5540 Firewall Edition Bundle
Cisco ASA 5520 Firewall Edition Bundle
Cisco 3750E Switch
Cisco 3900 Series Routers
Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0

5. Scalable infrastructure

With a load-balanced centralised communications system in place, Aurecon can expand its new communication capabilities across its entire global office network.

In addition, the company is also planning to integrate the desk phone with its computers, using Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0, to provide true unified communications across its Cisco and Microsoft product suite.

"The engineering business relies heavily on communications," says Honey. "Providing staff with a complete standardised experience assists them to do their jobs to the best of their ability."

For more information

For more information on Cisco Application Control Engine, please visit:

www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps6906/