

Sleep City's dream solution

Challenges

- Sleep City was expanding interstate and doubling its retail points of presence – it needed a new communication system that would be simple to deploy and cost-effective to scale.
- Access to Sleep City's server, particularly from remote stores, was unreliable and slow, with dial-up dropouts damaging customer service at the point of sale.
- Sleep City wanted to introduce in-store email to curtail expensive faxing and improve communication and customer service.

Cisco® Intelligent Retail Network solution

- Cisco 2600 Series routers
- Cisco CallManager software
- Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging
- Cisco 7960G Unified IP Phones
- Cisco IP Conference Stations 7935

Benefits

- The new end-to-end IP infrastructure is a flexible foundation for all voice and data communications, enabling Sleep City to double its points of presence with only a 10% increase in communication costs.
- Stores have much faster and more reliable access to Sleep City's server for point-of-sale and inventory data services, dramatically improving customer service.
- Email and low-cost IP phone calls have improved employee responsiveness and customer satisfaction while reducing fax costs by approximately 60%.
- Simple, centralised management of the entire communications system reduces user downtime and the need for IT personnel to travel to remote sites to resolve issues.
- The IP infrastructure is infinitely scalable, cost-effective to deploy and simple to configure for new users and locations, supporting Sleep City's ongoing growth.
- Sleep City can now maximise the value of its investment by integrating new retail services and solutions into its standardised IP infrastructure to further improve communications, productivity and security. These include video surveillance, wireless warehouse management and an intranet.

Australian bedding retailer Sleep City joins the growing ranks of companies worldwide that are discovering the benefits of IP communications to improve customer service, streamline operations and lower the cost of doing business.

With plans to double its Australian retail presence, Sleep City was ready to move on from dial-up PSTN for information networking, and wanted a new phone system that would be simple to deploy and cost-effective to scale. At the same time it was looking for ways to improve customer service and inventory management by deploying Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tagging to track stock movement in real time.

Director of IT Robert Howard realised that reliable, high quality inter-store communications would be central to success. After careful research, he selected a Cisco IP infrastructure. This provided the innovation, cost savings and scalability Sleep City was looking for to grow the business.

Robert says, "My research identified an immediate monthly saving from IP telephony that would multiply across our growing retail base to provide a large financial benefit over the longer term." And he was proved correct.

Bedding down an infrastructure for growth

"Sleep City has doubled its presence over three years to more than 70 stores nationally with only a 10% increase in communications costs," says Robert Howard.

The company achieved this by deploying a Cisco® Intelligent Retail Network for all voice and data communications, enabling toll-free phone calls between locations. And the system is infinitely scalable, making it cost-effective to accommodate new stores and staff without the need to invest in or upgrade technology.





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Robert Howard, Director of IT, Sleep City

Improving customer service

A more reliable infrastructure has also brought immediate benefits to Sleep City stores, eliminating frequent dial-up dropouts and speeding up access to point-of-sale and inventory data services.

Robert says: “Now server access is instantaneous instead of laborious. Our remote sites particularly have experienced vast improvements in speed. Staff can put orders into the system, quickly check stock or retrieve it from other sites around the country, and that means better customer service.”

Reducing downtime with simpler management

The system is easier and more cost-effective to manage, because all store locations can be simply configured from headquarters via the Wide Area Network (WAN). This reduces user downtime and the need for IT personnel to travel to remote sites to resolve issues.

Working smarter

The new system has dramatically changed the way Sleep City employees communicate between stores, making them much more productive and responsive – and that has led to improved customer satisfaction.

Sleep City previously relied heavily on faxing information. Customer-related email came via head office as the stores did not have their own email addresses. Now Sleep City has introduced email addresses for all stores, slashing fax costs by around 60% and enabling customers to directly contact their local stores for faster service. This also provides an electronic record of communications.

And when employees need to discuss something with a team member in another store, they send an email or pick up the phone – without worrying about call costs.

Employees gave the new IP telephone system the thumbs up, according to Robert: “Our receptionists like the ‘point and click’ and ‘drag and drop’ features – it’s very easy to follow.”

How it works

Designed to meet the needs of today’s demanding retail environment, Sleep City’s Cisco Intelligent Retail Network enables service delivery to a broad range of devices and applications. It features high-performance Cisco 2600 Series routers with built-in security and fail-safe measures protecting Sleep City’s data and business around the clock. Cisco CallManager efficiently processes network traffic for excellent voice quality and application performance, with voicemail provided by Cisco’s powerful Unity® Unified Messaging.

SLEEP CITY

"...an unrivalled combination of industry expertise and superior technology capabilities."

Robert Howard, Director of IT, Sleep City

The integrated address book, intuitive navigation and hands-free and headset options of Cisco's 7960G IP phones simplify communication. Calling another store, managing messages and returning customer calls are all as easy as pressing a button.

And doing business across Sleep City's expanded store base is a whole lot easier with in-the-same-room voice quality teleconferencing using the Cisco 7935 IP Conference Station.

Reaping return on investment

Sleep City's new Cisco Intelligent Retail Network is a flexible foundation for all voice and data communications, so the store can progressively integrate new productivity-enhancing technologies and extend new retail services to improve competitiveness.

"When I looked at an IP infrastructure I believed it was important to do something that was right at the leading edge," Robert explains. "We didn't want to buy technology that was going to be old as soon as it was installed. So the advanced capability of the Cisco infrastructure made it very attractive to us."

In February 2006 the company opened a brand new headquarters housing more than 300 administrative, distribution and manufacturing employees. At this site, Sleep City is installing IP video surveillance, enabling managers to check on the facility from any location via the Internet and improving security at a fraction of the cost of CCTV.

Next a Cisco wireless warehouse management system will be introduced with handheld scanners for more efficient inventory management. In future, RFID technology will be used to track stock in real time.

And communication across the growing organisation will be further improved with the launch later this year of a staff intranet. Robert says, "Our employees will be able to download internal forms, such as timesheets and service reports, and shoot them straight to the appropriate person via email."

All these innovations can be easily accommodated on Sleep City's converged services network to further improve return on investment.

Cisco: the right choice

"We chose Cisco because it offered an unrivalled combination of industry expertise and superior technology capabilities," Robert sums up. "And more and more, as we look at expanding our capabilities, we're seeing the benefits of having a standardised platform with a single vendor we can trust. Cisco supports many partners, and that gives us a lot of scope for the future."

"Now server access is instantaneous instead of laborious. Our remote sites particularly have experienced vast improvements in speed. Staff can put orders into the system, check stock or retrieve it from other sites around the country far more quickly, and that means better customer service."

Robert Howard, Director of IT, Sleep City





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