# Educational Service Provider Gains Agility to Quickly Scale Up or Down

Synergis Education introduced voice services in new locations in just two weeks, with Cisco Powered cloud service from TeleSpace.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Customer name:** Synergis Education
**Industry:** Educational Service Provider
**Location:** Chandler, Arizona
**Number of employees:** 150

### Challenge
· Quickly add communications services in new locations as business expands
· Free IT resources to focus on the core business
· Minimize total cost of ownership (TCO)

### Solution:
· Cisco Powered UCaaS (unified communications as a service) cloud service from TeleSpace, used for direct-dial extensions, voicemail, call trees, and softphone functionality
· Integration with Microsoft Office 365

### Results:
· Implemented communications services at new partner institution's location in just two weeks
· Acquired voice disaster recovery solution without IT effort or capital expense
· Lowered TCO compared to an on-premises solution

## Challenge

Established in 2011, Synergis Education provides educational services for colleges and universities that are evolving to serve a new type of student: adults returning to school. Synergis employees work onsite at partner institutions in multiple states to administer online, face-to-face, and blended learning programs. Company offices are in Arizona and Illinois.

Information technology is central to the company's business model, and the company uses cloud services exclusively. "To serve 21st-century students, we need to be a 21st-century company," says Lowell Vande Kamp, chief technology officer for Synergis. "That's why we made the decision from the beginning to be 100-percent cloud-based. We don't have any servers to manage, or even a data center. This allows us to focus on service excellence for our partners instead of managing infrastructure." The company uses cloud services for email, document sharing, accounting, project management, human resources, student information systems, learning management systems, software development, and more.

The impetus to add a cloud collaboration solution to the mix arrived when Synergis outgrew the voice service included in its executive suites lease. Synergis headquarters had grown from one executive suite in 2011 to six suites in 2013. "As a growing company, we wanted the flexibility to scale up and down at will, and to control call trees and an auto attendant," Vande Kamp says.

The need for a flexible collaboration solution suddenly became more urgent when Synergis signed a new educational partner. The contract required Synergis to provide voice services for its remote learning program offices in just two weeks. "We needed to quickly deploy voice services to meet the contract terms with a

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Lowell Vande Kamp
Chief Technology Officer
Synergis Education

private university that has multiple locations in Virginia," says Vande Kamp. "At the same time, I needed an enterprise-grade solution that would support Synergis employees at our corporate locations in Arizona and Illinois, as well as a number of remote staff spread across the U.S. The question became, 'How quickly can we start up a hosted VoIP solution?'"

## Solution
Synergis engaged NextNet Partners, a Cisco partner, to coordinate the vendor selection process. After an intensive, three-week evaluation period, Synergis selected the Cisco Powered UCaaS (unified communications as a service) cloud service from TeleSpace, combined with network design and integration services from NextNet.

"The main advantage of the Cisco Powered cloud service for our rapidly changing workforce is that we can quickly and securely add more locations, users, and applications," says Vande Kamp. "We can scale back just as easily. And using Cisco elements for both our underlying network and our communications solution reduces complexity. This way, I don't have to worry about multiple vendors each believing that the others are responsible for a particular issue. I know Cisco solutions work together."

The only equipment required at the offices are Cisco Unified IP Phones and a Cisco Integrated Services Router (ISR). Synergis pays a monthly per-user fee that covers all services the company needs. So far, these include direct dial extensions, voicemail, call trees for the toll-free number, and the ability to make calls from laptops.

## Results
Major business advantages of the Cisco Powered UCaaS cloud service for the growing company include business agility, relief for the IT team, disaster recovery, and avoidance of capital outlay.

### Gained Agility to Quickly Scale Up or Down
Synergis was able to provide voice services at its new partner's Virginia campuses just two weeks after signing up for the TeleSpace cloud service. The employees on these campuses initially used Cisco Jabber software on Windows laptops, and later switched to Cisco Unified IP Phones.

As Synergis expands or contracts its workforce, the company can freely add or subtract phones, locations, and collaboration services. The company can request the change using a self-service portal or by emailing TeleSpace.

### Freed Up IT Resources to Focus on the Core Business
Using Cisco Powered UCaaS cloud service from TeleSpace frees up the Synergis IT team to work on strategic projects. For example, Synergis did not need to plan and build a disaster recovery solution for communications, because TeleSpace already made this investment. "For a startup like Synergis, a big advantage of the cloud is that it spared us the effort and expense of building a disaster recovery data center," says Trent Hamlin, senior network engineering specialist for Synergis Education. "A power outage at headquarters doesn't affect voice services for people in other locations, as it would if we had an on-premises solution. And those of us in the affected office can work from home, using softphone software on our laptops to connect to the cloud service."

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## Avoided Upfront Costs and Minimized TCO

Using the Cisco Powered UCaaS cloud service spared Synergis the capital expense of an on-premises communications solution. The company pays by the user, and only for the collaboration capabilities that each user needs. "If we later want contact center functions such as intelligent routing, we'll be able to add them right away, without having to wait to procure and provision our own servers," says Vande Kamp. "There is no question that using a cloud provider keeps our costs down."

Later, Synergis won't need to purchase prepaid cell phones with local numbers while waiting for phone service at new partner institutions. Instead, Synergis can just ask TeleSpace to provide phones with local phone numbers. The phones will connect to the TeleSpace cloud as soon as they are installed.

## Next Steps

Now Synergis is planning to use the Cisco Powered UCaaS cloud service in new ways to increase partner satisfaction and internal efficiency. One plan is to integrate the service with the Office365 cloud service, enabling employees to play back and manage voicemail messages from their email inbox.

Another plan is to integrate the cloud voice services with Microsoft Lync, so that Synergis employees and partners can click to dial. "We already use Lync for presence and instant messaging, and integrating Cisco voice call control into Lync eliminates the expense of having two call control systems," Vande Kamp says.

In the future, executives who work from home offices will receive new, portable Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones that TeleSpace configures with an always-on VPN connection. Executives can bring the phone with them on trips to place and receive voice and video calls from their office number, over any wired or wireless network.

Synergis is also investigating using the Cisco Jabber mobile to provide single number reach. Employees would be able to receive calls from their office number whether in the office or traveling. Synergis is also looking into using Cisco TelePresence to provide an in-person experience for conversations between Synergis employees and partner institutions in different offices. Cisco TelePresence also reduces travel expenses.

## Product List

### Collaboration

· TeleSpace UCaaS, a Cisco Powered cloud collaboration service

· Cisco Unified IP Phones 6971

### Network

Cisco Integrated Services Routers 2921 and 881

### Wireless

Cisco Aironet 2602 Wireless Access Points