

Presenting Cisco Unified Communications to Business Executives in Midsize Businesses

After IT groups decide to adopt unified communications, they must demonstrate the business value of the solution to justify the budget. IT groups are most likely to persuade business decision makers within their organization to adopt unified communications when they explain how it helps meet top-level business needs and delivers return on investment (ROI).

Executive Summary

IT groups make the decision to adopt unified communications because they understand the cost savings and business process benefits of converged voice, video, and data networks. However, the company president, chief financial officer, facilities managers, and other managers outside the IT group are not as familiar with the benefits of convergence. Many assume that IP telephony is no more than an upgrade to the telephone system. And if they are unaware of problems with the existing public branch exchange (PBX), key system, or Centrex service, they might see no reason to approve a new capital expense.

IT managers need to convey that unified communications accomplishes much more than providing dial tone or replacing an old phone system. Rather, it enables business process change that helps meet a company's top-level goals. Sage Research identifies the most important benefits of unified communications as organizational efficiency, including both cost savings and revenue generation, end-user productivity, and IT staff productivity.¹ Depending on company priorities, IT groups can justify the business case for unified communications by focusing on ROI, business process improvements, or both. IT also needs to be prepared to answer concerns pertaining to the reliability and security of unified communications.

This white paper is intended for IT directors and managers in midsize companies. It provides suggestions for explaining the business value of unified communications to the executive team, and includes success stories and advice from IT managers who have presented the business case for unified communications to their companies' business managers.

Cisco Unified Communications: A Business Definition

Cisco® Unified Communications improves operational efficiency and contributes to a consistent and superior customer experience by making communications more effective, secure, mobile, and personal. More than just a voice solution, Cisco Unified Communications is a strategic business investment that integrates voice, data, video, security, and mobility into a single, smart solution that works with existing business applications to make the organization more competitive. It transforms the business with advanced messaging; virtual contact centers; integrated voice, video, and Web conferencing; mobile IP soft phones; and voicemail. Employees can communicate how they want and when they want – from one easy-to-use interface.

¹ Sage Research, "Productivity and the IPC Business Case," May 2005

Focus on How Unified Communications Meets Top-Level Business Goals

Business managers are more concerned with how unified communications meets their business goals than how it works. IT groups make the most compelling case for unified communications when they focus their presentation on how the technology meets the business needs of the company, avoiding technical explanations of concepts such as soft switches and line speeds. Common business challenges that unified communications helps solve are improving customer service to gain competitive advantage, improving operational efficiency, and controlling costs.

Improving Customer Service for Competitive Advantage

In a January 2006 survey by Sage Research, 83 percent of executives from small and medium-sized businesses stated that unified communications gives them a competitive advantage over other organizations in their industries.² Sources for competitive advantage include:

- Enabling employees to transfer calls to anyone else in the company, even if they are in another office. This avoids the need to have customers hang up and call back to reach another person. The ability to transfer calls easily also makes it practical to deploy workers in remote offices, which makes more employees available to help customers.
- Making contact centers more efficient with automated call routing. With Cisco[®] Unified Contact Center, companies can route calls based on multiple criteria, including language preference, location, or a caller's relationship with a particular agent.
- Making it easier for callers to reach the employee they need. The presence technology in Cisco Unified Communications enables employees to quickly determine the best method for reaching coworkers before initiating contact, saving time otherwise spent dialing multiple phones and leaving voicemail messages. Other features that save time include single number reach, simultaneous rings to multiple phones, and Cisco Unity[®] unified messaging, which enables employees to retrieve voicemail and e-mail from either a PC or phone, whichever is most convenient.
- Enabling employees to set up prescheduled or reservationless conference calls combining voice, video, and Web collaboration.

Navigant Consulting: Emphasize Ease of Reaching Employees

Navigant Consulting is a Chicago-based e-business consulting company. Navigant acquired seven new companies in 2005, each with its own voice and data networks and voicemail system. The IT group realized that disparate vendors, management interfaces, and tools would diminish communications reliability – an essential attribute for customer service organizations.

To demonstrate the value of Cisco Unified Communications to the executive team, the Navigant IT group explained how it would help increase customer satisfaction by making it easier to reach the company's highly mobile consultants. They can now log into any Cisco Unified IP Phone in any office to personalize it with their own phone number, speed dial numbers, and other preferences. "People from Navigant and clients are impressed that they can reach me [at my ordinary number] whether I'm working in Atlanta or in my home office in New York," says Jeff Hall, Associate Director at Navigant. "I can talk to clients when they call, rather than wasting time checking voicemail every half hour. Clients love the quick response."

² Sage Research, "Unified Communications Application: Use and Benefits," January 2006

The IT group also explained the cost savings from Cisco Unified Communications. “We’ve eliminated some 20 hours a week in onsite vendor expenses for moves, adds, and changes at our offices,” says Cory Daehn, director of IT architecture at Navigant.

“I can talk to clients when they call, rather than wasting time checking voicemail every half hour. Clients love the quick response.”

– Jeff Hall, Associate Director, Navigant Consulting, Inc.

Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center: Emphasize Competitive Advantage

Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center is a private, nonprofit, state-licensed healthcare and social service agency in Illinois with approximately 700 employees that provides comprehensive community-based programs for children, youth, and families. To sell the value of Cisco Unified Communications to the board of directors, the IT group explained how it would support the organization’s primary business goals: gaining a competitive advantage with funders, reducing costs, and increasing service effectiveness.

The source of these advantages is the built-in Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express feature in Cisco integrated services routers, which, the IT group explained, avoided the need for a large, upfront capital investment. “Our funders are impressed with our technological sophistication and are talking to us about expanding and adding programs,” says Jerry Garvey, chief information officer. “Our understanding of network technology gives them confidence in our ability to execute.” The ability to add voice services to new sites quickly helps the organization qualify for cash grants that require results within short timeframes. In addition, employees can make sure that they do not miss important calls from funders and clients by setting up call-transfer rules using a Web interface.

Telephony costs have decreased because interoffice calls now travel over the IP network, avoiding toll costs. “By transitioning to Cisco Unified Communications, we have already cut local and long-distance costs by 20 percent, despite adding 10 offices,” says Garvey.

Staff productivity is especially important in nonprofit organizations. With the productivity-enhancing features of the Cisco Unity Connection voicemail system, the center’s mobile employees can call other users with simple voice commands and conveniently retrieve voice messages from their e-mail inbox or through any Web browser.

Improving Operational Efficiency

Business decision makers are receptive to technology that improves business processes in order to gain operational efficiency. Metrics for operational efficiency gains from unified communications include increased productivity, greater automation of processes for fewer errors, and cost savings. Following are examples from a 2006 survey by Forrester Consulting:

- *Retail* – Seventy-five percent of retail store managers said they would save from several minutes to up to one hour per event with the ability to reach decision makers using any communications device, with a single phone number.

- *Healthcare* – Seventy percent of nurses said they would save from 30 minutes to one hour daily with instant access to experts, which translates into better patient care and lower staffing costs.
- *Financial services* – Sixty-six percent of respondents said that if loan specialists could save time by more quickly reaching bankers, they could process more loan application inquiries per day. All of these respondents estimated that they would save at least four hours per loan.

“The primary advantage of unified communications is to help organizations use technology better, simplify the user experience, and improve business performance by adding speed and agility to common business processes.”

– Forrester Consulting³

TVCom: Explain How Unified Communications Supports Growth

TVCom of Belgrade, Serbia, provides inbound and outbound call center services for Fortune 100 companies. To accommodate growing call volumes, the IT manager convinced company executives to adopt Cisco Unified Communications instead of upgrading its PBX system. “Our PBX system was just an ordinary phone exchange that could not provide the interactive voice response and intelligent call handling that we needed,” says Marija Savic, IT manager at TVCom.

Focusing on the business goal – providing superior service while making the person staff more productive – Savic explained how TVCom could integrate its new Cisco solution with its existing customer relationship management (CRM) platform with Cisco Unified CRM Connector. Management agreed to the project, and the connector now speeds up call handling by enabling agents to click to dial from CRM database records. When a registered user calls the contact center, the CRM system recognizes the phone number and forwards the customer record to the agent most qualified to respond to a question. “This feature was critical because we have a limited number of agents, all of whom are doing several jobs at once,” says Savic.

TVCom managers also liked the growth potential of Cisco Unified Communications. “Our system is scalable, so if we attract new clients in a short period of time, we can respond to their needs quickly,” says Darko Bogojevic, business development manager at TVCom.

CALA Group: Maintaining Communications and Productivity for Remote Construction Site Staff

Headquartered in Edinburgh, CALA Group Limited is one of the UK’s leading privately owned residential and commercial property developers. At any one time, CALA has around 40 construction sites across the UK, and each site has two offices, one for construction and one for sales. Maintaining communications to these sites is critical to the business. Before moving to Cisco Unified Communications, sales and marketing operations were interrupted by telephone line reconnection.

³ Forrester Consulting, “Unified Communication Industry Study,” February 2006

The IT group explained the how Cisco Unified Communications would deliver consistent communication to the sites while saving the company money. The previous communication networks at each site consisted of a broadband data connection and separate phone and fax lines for each office. The problem CALA faced was that the offices had to move around as site development progressed. Getting the broadband service provider to move connections was time-consuming and caused outages of anywhere from one week to one month, severely limiting the marketing and sales departments ability to function. The Cisco Unified Communications solution incorporates LANs at the permanent office and a WAN connecting them. Each construction site has a single broadband connection with wireless connectivity for the entire site – eliminating the hassle of moving and reconnecting employees when the offices move. “When we presented the new site communications model based on Cisco Technology to CALA’s regional managers, they said if it prevents or mitigates against the loss of communication to the site for the period when we’re moving site offices, then we’ll pay anything,” said Alan Donoghue, group IT director for CALA.

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The Cisco technology has helped to improve productivity across the whole organization. For the construction sites, Cisco technology is transforming communications and delivering significant financial savings to CALA. Donoghue estimates that CALA will save between £1500 and £2500 for each construction site as a result of deploying Cisco Unified Communications. Across all 40 construction sites, this is a potential biannual cost savings of at least £80,000.

Controlling Costs

Cost control is one of the most compelling arguments for unified communications. Cost control has a major impact on profitability because every dollar saved improves the bottom line by one dollar. If the company earns a dollar of new revenue, in contrast, only the net margin improves the bottom line. Sources of cost savings from unified communications include:

- *Elimination of charges for moves, adds, and changes* – Carriers charge US\$75 to \$200 apiece for this service.
- *Voice and Web conferencing savings* – Shifting from a third-party conferencing service to an internal conferencing system based on unified communications reduced costs by nearly 30 percent for participants in the Sage Research survey.
- *Reduced maintenance costs* – Traditional PBX systems can be costly to maintain.
- *Reduced phone bills and, in some cases, fewer phone bills* – Companies bypass tolls entirely if the caller dials someone on the same network, such as branch office employees. If the destination is off the network, as is the case for customers and partners, companies still save because the call transfers from the IP network to the public switched telephone

network (PSTN) at the last possible opportunity. In the Sage Research study, 62 percent of respondents whose employees used softphone software on their laptops while traveling saved \$500 or more monthly on long-distance charges and cell phone bills, with an average savings of \$1727 monthly. Sixteen percent said they saved \$5000 or more per month.

- *Reduced IT network management requirements* – The company's IT group can maintain a single network for data, voice, and video rather than separate networks for each. Easy-to-use management and configuration tools and end-user self-service configuration further simplify management.
- *Elimination of multiple unnecessary leased lines at each branch office.*
- *Replacement of traditional analog intercom systems* – In a Cisco Unified Communications deployment, solutions from Cisco application partners broadcast announcements and alarms to the built-in speakers of Cisco Unified IP Phones.

WesBanco Bank: Explain the Competitive Advantage of Unified Communications

To gain executive support, the IT group at West Virginia's WesBanco Bank emphasized the competitive advantages that Cisco Unified Communications would confer. "With Cisco MeetingPlace®...our commercial loan officers will no longer have to tell customers, 'We'll get back to you after our regional meeting next week,'" says Mark Krupinski, VP of technology at WesBanco. "Instead, they will conference together immediately and have a decision within 24 hours to the customer."

The IT group also highlighted the cost savings. By converging its previously separate voice and data networks, WesBanco reduced capital and operational expenses by \$1.6 million annually. The IT group also mentioned future sources of cost savings, including video-based training for branch employees, which will enable faster product introduction, and replacing branch VCR and tape surveillance systems with digital video systems, which will reduce time and costs of managing incident investigations.

Finally, the WesBanco IT group explained how Cisco Unified Communications would help ensure business continuance in the event of a local or national disaster. Provided with Cisco Unified IP Phones and a VPN connection at home, bank employees will be able to continue working from home even if they cannot commute to their offices. According to Krupinski, "This puts us in a position to maintain operational continuity in the event of a disease outbreak such as influenza, an area of growing concern to government banking regulators and one which we have already been contacted about."

Explain the Security Advantages of Unified Communications

Business decision makers are rightfully concerned with security, partly because of government regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley Act, EU Data Protection Directive, Gramm-Leach Bliley Act Data Protection regulation, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), California Senate Bill 1386, BASEL II-Operational Risk, the USA Patriot Act, and others.

IP telephony is essentially just another service running on a network, and all the security technologies and policies that companies have deployed for their data networks can protect voice services as well. This differentiates IP telephony and unified communications from traditional telephone systems, which often lack general-purpose, cost-effective security measures than can be easily adapted as business conditions change.

Security is among the most important differentiators of Cisco Unified Communications solutions. Independent tests by Miercom rate Cisco voice security as the best in the industry. With Cisco Unified Communications, comprehensive security starts in the network itself and extends all the way to Cisco Unified IP Phones. All system components – call control, endpoints, infrastructure, and applications – are secure without requiring multivendor integration efforts. These multiple layers of defense protect against known threats as well as constantly emerging unknown threats.

A Cisco Unified Communications solution protects the network and information in two ways: ensuring that the network can withstand viruses and attacks to remain continuously available, and protecting private company and customer information from network intruders. Many business decision makers do not want to know about the specific security technologies that Cisco offers. Rather, they want to know that the solution can withstand attacks and viruses to remain available, and that it complies with regulatory requirements. Executives in some industries will also want assurance that Cisco security solutions can protect confidential voice traffic, as well as data entered at the telephone keypad during interactive voice response (IVR) sessions, from snooping. Cisco voice-over-VPN solutions provide this protection.

Emphasize that Unified Communications Transforms the Business

Unified communications is transforming business operations. Many business decision makers assume that unified communications is simply an upgrade to the phone system – another way to obtain dial tone. They will be more likely to approve the budget if IT explains how much more it provides. In fact, Cisco Unified Communications solutions transform the role of the company phone system from a mere provider of dial tone to a valuable tool to help companies achieve their top-level goals to improve processes, increase productivity, improve customer satisfaction, and reduce costs. One analogy is that IP telephony provides more than traditional telephony in the same way a computer provides more than a calculator.

“It is clear that IP communications is being used for much more than a basic ‘dial tone’ replacement. More and more organizations are exploiting its productivity benefits with increasingly sophisticated applications.”

– Sage Research

Ways that unified communications enables process change include:

- Significantly decreases the time that employees spend trying to reach each other, and thereby increasing the speed of decision making. Employees at organizations using unified communications client software on their PCs save 32 minutes a day on average by being able to reach other co-workers on the first attempt. Employees using unified messaging save 43 minutes a day on average because they can manage all e-mail, voicemail, and faxes from a single inbox.⁴
- Automatically routes customer calls to the correct person based on their phone number or IVR, reducing time spent answering and transferring calls.

⁴ Sage Research, 2006

- Enables employees to use simple applications delivered to the built-in display of their Cisco Unified IP Phones – for example, to log in and out of shifts, record inventory, or check the day’s work schedule from the IP phone. Hotels that provide Cisco Unified IP Phones in guest rooms can send information such as restaurant specials for far less cost than if they provided a PC in every room.
- Allows employees who are rarely in the office, such as salespeople, to log into any Cisco Unified IP Phone to customize it with their own phone number and other options. This eliminates the need to provide a desk for every employee, saving real estate and reducing operating expenses.
- Enables mobile security employees to view feeds from video surveillance cameras on their Cisco Wireless Unified IP Phones.

“Employees at organizations using unified communications clients...save a full 32 minutes a day on average by being able to reach other co-workers on the first attempt.”

– Sage Research

Tailor the Presentation to the Needs of Individual Line-of-Business Managers

In some cases, IT groups approach each line of business separately. Before an IT vice president of a major bank spoke with the investment banking group, for example, he did his research to learn that responsiveness is an important competitive advantage. He conveyed the advantages of Cisco Unified Communications by explaining how associates could receive calls directed to their phone numbers no matter where they were – home, office, or hotel – using a Cisco VPN solution and Cisco Unified IP Phones.

To prepare to meet with a line-of-business manager, IT groups can find out the business goals and note how unified communications helps achieve those goals. Table 1 lists the major business benefits of unified communications by work function, and shows corresponding Cisco Unified Communications products and features.

Table 1. Benefits of Unified Communications for Individual Lines of Business

Work Function	Business Benefit of Unified Communications	Cisco Unified Communications Features that Enable the Benefit
Sales and Marketing	Streamline communications and improve customer service Integrate with back-end systems to gain a complete view of the customer Improve productivity Deliver information that mobile employees need to be productive	Cisco MeetMe conferencing Cisco Unified IP Phone features Simple applications delivered to the built-in display of Cisco Unified IP Phones Cisco Unity unified messaging Extension mobility
Human Resources (HR)	Enhance employee satisfaction Gain an advantage in hiring and retaining talent Reduce administration and training costs	Integration of HR applications and voice Easier moves, adds, and changes Telework options for employees Online directories Self-service HR applications

Work Function	Business Benefit of Unified Communications	Cisco Unified Communications Features that Enable the Benefit
Facilities Manager/Telecom Manager	Easier and faster moves, adds, and changes Faster deployment of equipment, applications and services while allowing for greater flexibility	Cisco Unified Communications Manager Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Cisco Unity administration features Extension Mobility Integration of XML Applications
Mobile Workers	More productive employees Improved customer and partner responsiveness	Remote, secure access for distributed workforce and teleworkers Extension mobility, messaging, single number reach (find me/follow me)
IT	Lower cost structure More satisfied employees Faster service deployment	Converged infrastructure Self-service functions

In some cases, IT might want to find out more about the job function before presenting unified communications to an individual department. For example, Table 2 shows the business value of unified communications specifically for facilities managers.

Table 2. Selling the Value of Unified Communications to Facilities Managers

Job Responsibility	Business Value of Unified Communications
Provide excellent customer service for vendors, suppliers, and facility users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves responsiveness of facilities crew by making it easier for customers to report suspected problems with buildings and equipment operation. (<i>Enabler:</i> Cisco Wireless Unified IP Phones and Cisco Unity unified messaging) Minimizes employee downtime with employee self-service moves, adds, and changes Accelerates transactions with vendors and suppliers by automating work orders for deliveries and service (<i>Enabler:</i> Cisco Unified Contact Center Express)
Ensure compliance with government regulations for fire, life, and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates training for warehouse employees on fire, life, or safety regulations (<i>Enabler:</i> Extensible Markup Language [XML] applications delivered to the built-in display of Cisco Unified IP Phones in the warehouse) Enables broadcast of emergency information, policy changes, or advance notice of events (<i>Enabler:</i> XML applications delivered to the built-in display or speaker of Cisco Unified IP Phones) Enables video surveillance to help ensure safety of crew, resources, materials, and nonfacility crew employees (<i>Enabler:</i> Power over Ether [PoE] video surveillance cameras and Cisco Unified IP Phones, used to display the video) Provides enhanced 9-1-1 service that reports the caller's phone number and exact location within the building (<i>Enabler:</i> Cisco Emergency Responder)
Manage budgets concerning labor, supplies, and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can reduce costs by providing a single, converged network for voice, video, and data Eliminates the need to pay a service provider \$75–200 for each move, add, or change; employees themselves can move by simply reconnecting the Cisco Unified IP Phone in the new location Reduces time and cost to add new buildings Enables employees to provide real-time job status updates, including resources allocated and used for labor, supplies, equipment, and more (<i>Enabler:</i> XML applications delivered to the built-in display of Cisco Unified IP Phones) Allows use of simple applications on Cisco Unified IP Phones for equipment testing, repair, and maintenance; facility cleaning, landscape, recycling, garbage disposal Reduces travel time and expense with remote management and surveillance capabilities (<i>Enabler:</i> Video sent to the display of Cisco Unified IP Phones)

Develop an ROI Business Case

Some business decision makers approve investments based on ROI alone, including both direct and indirect cost savings as well as productivity. Others also consider “soft” benefits that are more difficult to quantify, such as improved customer service and employee job satisfaction. According to the Sage Research survey, 88 percent of the small and midsize businesses surveyed sought employee productivity from unified communications. They reported the quantifiable gains shown in Table 3.

“Real-world users’ experiences clearly indicate that [unified communications] applications provide both employee productivity benefits and direct monetary savings. As a result, the ROI case for unified communications is fairly comprehensive.”

– Sage Research

Table 3. IP Telephony Cost, Revenue, and Productivity Benefits from the 2006 Sage Research Survey

Benefit	Percent of Survey Respondents Experiencing the Benefit	Average Benefit Reported
Additional sales revenue – for example, from increased call center activity	81 percent	\$3000 more monthly sales per inbound sales agent
Additional inbound sales calls from integrated contact center applications	59 percent	30 additional calls daily per inbound sales agent
Less telephone tag for employees	48 percent	4.3 hours savings weekly per employee
Increased mobile worker employee	45 percent	5 hours weekly per mobile worker
Improved remote office employee productivity	39 percent	4 hours weekly per remote office employee
Faster moves, adds, and changes to telephone extensions	45 percent	2 hours per move; average of three yearly moves per employee
Less time spent on vendor management because of single-vendor solution	43 percent	5 hours monthly per IT employee
Less time spent managing telephony-related equipment	42 percent	4.7 hours weekly for IT group
Less time spent resolving user issues because users can use telephony features without needing assistance	38 percent	4.7 hours weekly per IT employee involved with telephone support

Use the Cisco Smart Business Roadmap for Flexible Deployment Options and Investment Protection

Reassure business decision makers that the transition to unified communications does not have to be made all at once. Using the customizable Cisco Smart Business Roadmap, businesses can implement Cisco Unified Communications at the pace that is right for their budget and that allows them to accomplish their business goals. The Cisco Smart Business Roadmap includes examples of scalable sets of technology solutions designed to enable small and medium-sized businesses to align their technology plans with their short- and long-term business priorities. It gives business and technical decision makers the confidence of knowing that their technology investment will address immediate business challenges and opportunities, yet also support their long-term goals.

LeTourneau University: Set Up a Demonstration

At LeTourneau University of Longview, Texas, budget for unified communications was originally refused. Gary Coleman, the senior director of information technology for the university, tried again when the university began building a US\$8 million engineering, science, and technology center. The existing PBX lacked adequate capacity for the new building, so his group had the choice to either purchase a new chassis and cards for the existing PBX, or implement a Cisco Unified Communications solution for the new building alone. “Rather than proposing a campus wide

upgrade to Cisco Unified Communications, I focused on the new building alone,” says Coleman. The complete Cisco Unified Communications solution – Cisco Unified Communications Manager, Cisco Unified IP Phones, Cisco Unity unified messaging, and a service contract – would cost less than upgrading the aging PBX.

While intrigued by the cost benefits of unified communications, Coleman’s management remained unsure whether the technology worked and was easy to use. To allay concerns, Coleman asked his Cisco account manager to set up an onsite demo. The Cisco team brought a mobile Cisco Unified Communications Manager server and several Cisco Unified IP Phones to the conference room. “Management saw it was a real solution that really worked,” says Coleman. Their next request was for customer references, which Coleman also provided.

“I would advise IT groups that approach their management teams for unified communications funding to have a good reference list and show cost savings,” says Coleman. “For the cost savings, consider the increased productivity of the IT staff who manage the system as well as the Cisco Unified IP Phone users themselves.”

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– Gary Coleman, Senior Director of Information Technology, LeTourneau University

Anticipate and Address Executive Concerns

Before meeting with the executive team, IT groups can anticipate questions that business decision makers commonly ask and be prepared with answers.

Have other companies our size done this?

Many midsize businesses seek to minimize risk by ensuring that other companies of similar size and in related industries have already successfully deployed a Cisco Unified Communications solution. Cisco can provide case studies and customer references for unified communications deployments in small and midsize businesses as well as large enterprises in a wide variety of industries.

Why should we fix something that’s not broken?

The executive team might be unaware of problems with aging PBX systems, including reliability and the difficulty of obtaining parts. When Gary Coleman of LeTourneau University first proposed a unified communications solution, which included transitioning to a next-generation service provider that could provide more-reliable fiber-optic cable, management objected. “They were under the impression that we had never had problems with the legacy system,” says Coleman. “I said, ‘Yes we do, but it’s my job to keep you from knowing about the problems.’” Coleman helped make his case by explaining the problems with the existing PBX, the way that a Cisco Unified

Communications solution would overcome those problems, and additional benefits it would provide.

Is it reliable? Will it disrupt the business?

Managers want to know that the unified communications system will be as reliable as their traditional phone system. Cisco Unified Communications can meet or even exceed the availability and resilience of time-division multiplexing (TDM)-based communications systems when companies use the appropriate Cisco technologies and operational processes. For example, if the network link between a remote office and the data center goes down, the Cisco router at the remote site uses a capability called Survivable Remote Site Telephony (SRST) to automatically detect the outage, keep IP phones operational, and begin routing the call over the PSTN. In this way, company employees can continue to make and receive calls during the outage. When the WAN link is restored, the router automatically returns control to the Cisco Unified Communications Manager server. Cisco also provides integrated security solutions that protect Cisco Unified Communications Manager servers from viruses and attacks so that the phone system is always available.

Why Cisco?

Reasons that business decision makers can feel confident in choosing Cisco as their unified communications vendor include:

- *Industry leadership* – Cisco is the industry leader in unified communications solutions, with more than 48,000 Cisco Unified Communications customers worldwide and more than 10 million IP phones shipped. The company is financially stable.
- *Lifecycle Services* – Cisco and its certified partners offer the technical expertise and customer services that midsize businesses need to successfully deploy and operate their networks. Cisco's service offerings range from day-to-day technical support to highly specialized advanced services that protect your network investment and help ensure operational reliability. The Cisco Lifecycle Services approach addresses needs at each stage of a network's lifecycle – preparation, planning, design, implementation, operation, or optimization. At each stage, Cisco and its partners have a specific support strategy.
- *Financing* – Cisco Capital[®] offers a wide range of financing services designed specifically for the needs of midsize businesses. Companies can even bring their existing phone system lease into the Cisco Unified Communications solution, for convenient replacement of outdated PBX systems. With straightforward, flexible leasing options, competitive rates, and fast credit processing, Cisco Capital can help a business acquire the solution it needs to be successful now, and accommodate new business needs in the future. Options include an easy lease program and a bundled services program including a Cisco SMARTnet[®] maintenance contract.
- *Cisco Smart Business Roadmap* – Cisco Unified Communications solutions are part of the Cisco Smart Business Roadmap, which defines how businesses can begin with the right-size solution today, expanding it to handle more people and more functions as the business grows, helping to protect the company's technology investment.

Conclusion

IT groups are most successful in demonstrating the value of unified communications to business decision makers when they focus on how the technology meets top-level business goals. For many companies, making an ROI case also helps make the decision. The key point to convey is

that unified communications is much more than a replacement for the existing phone system; it enables business-process change for a competitive advantage with customers, operational efficiency, and cost control.

For more information on Cisco Unified Communications solutions, visit: www.cisco.com/go/cuc.

To arrange a demo for your executive team, contact your local Cisco Unified Communications specialized reseller or Cisco account manager.

For more information on the Cisco Smart Business Roadmap, visit: www.cisco.com/go/sbr.

For the complete Sage Research study, visit:
www.cisco.com/application/pdf/en/us/guest/netsol/ns359/c654/cdccont_0900aec802a3c16.pdf.



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
168 Robinson Road
#28-01 Capital Tower
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: +31 0 800 020 0791
Fax: +31 0 20 357 1100

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