



Customer Case Study

Musical Chairs hit the Right Note as Marketing Agency Introduces Flexible Working Using Managed Cisco Unified Communications from BT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

Caseworks

INDUSTRY

Marketing

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Increasing staff numbers without incurring significant real estate costs
- Maintaining a flexible and attractive business model to hire and retain top talent
- Harnessing technology to maintain and develop relationships with customers

SOLUTIONS

- Managed end-to-end solution from BT, based on Cisco Unified Communications
- Secure WAN for data and intra-company voice
- Wireless LAN for dynamic network and Internet access

BUSINESS VALUE

- 53 per cent annual return on investment, with £5,000 in capital costs avoided
- Contented and more motivated staff
- The ability to support business growth by scaling people and resources

Faced with the prospect of moving to new premises to accommodate growing staff numbers, a marketing agency instead solved the problem with flexible working. A managed solution from BT – based on Cisco Unified Communications – is enabling people to work from home for part of the week with the same facilities that they enjoy in the office.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

There are much worse problems than managing growth, but that does not make it any less of a challenge.

In business since 1995, Caseworks is a marketing services agency operating primarily in the IT and financial services industries. The company produces marketing and sales collateral including text and video case studies, white papers, brochures, sales toolkits, thought leadership and web content. Today, Caseworks directly employs 17 people, of whom nine are business-and-technically-expert principal journalists. In addition, Caseworks co-operates with bilingual correspondents throughout Europe and further afield, bringing the total team to around 30 people. Caseworks also works with a small stable of partner agencies to provide a one-stop-shop for design, web and video services.

Marketing know-how linked to top-flight editorial skills has been an attractive combination for the company's blue chip global client list, which includes Compuware, IBM, KPMG, and Visa International. With that success has come the challenge of managing growth. Between 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 Caseworks' turnover almost doubled. Current projections are for a further 30 per cent increase in 2005/2006. Such major growth has seen a surge in staff numbers and, with further recruitment in the pipeline, the company was quickly outgrowing its existing office accommodation.

Tony Linsell, Chairman at Caseworks, explains: "Rather than incur the upheaval and additional real estate costs of moving, we decided to look at a virtual business model. Home working was an obvious solution but our people benefit from daily face-to-face interaction, so that would not be the total answer."

However, Caseworks was not organised to manage the industrial strength IT implications of adopting a virtual business model. Although one of the company's directors has nominal IT responsibility, it does not employ IT staff as such. Tony continues: "Whatever solution we decided upon, we did not want an increase in administrative staff. Virtually everyone in the company is fee earning in one way or another. That's the way we like it, and that's the way we intend it to stay."

SOLUTION

As a technology-savvy organisation, Caseworks knew that an IP-based solution would be necessary, and design and support could be outsourced. So the hard part was deciding upon the organisational model to be adopted before opening negotiations with suppliers.

Phil Lumb, Managing Director and co-owner of Caseworks, takes up the story: "A lot of information sharing goes on at an informal level. That teamwork is essential to maintain a sharp focus on customers' needs. The arrangement we decided upon was rostered home working for six of our principal journalists, enabled by hot desking here in our offices in Essex. That way our people can work from home for two or three days each week, but still enjoy the social and knowledge transfer benefits of coming into the office."

"BT took all the detail and worry away in terms of designing and integrating a solution that would be completely compatible with our existing Cisco local area network. And with the BT Remote Diagnostic Service we would have peace of mind, with BT able to remotely investigate and swiftly resolve any problems."

—Tony Linsell, Chairman, Caseworks

Caseworks discussed its plans with a number of vendors, but felt that only BT could offer real experience in developing a Cisco IP-based solution delivered as a managed service designed with a small business in mind. After a meeting at which Caseworks explained its thinking and objectives, BT came back with a detailed solution and project plan that offered the phased approach Caseworks wanted in order to manage risk.

Tony says: "BT took all the detail and worry away in terms of designing and integrating a solution that would be completely compatible with our existing Cisco local area network. And with the BT Remote Diagnostic Service we would have peace of mind, with BT able to remotely investigate and swiftly resolve any problems."

With a designated BT project manager co-ordinating every aspect of the solution – from design and configuration to installation and training – BT engineers replaced the company's ageing PBX with an IP telephony solution from Cisco Systems' Unified Communications portfolio over just two days and with zero business disruption. Cisco Unified CallManager Express was enabled on a new Cisco 2800 Series Integrated Services Router (ISR) using the company's existing Cisco LAN. Most people were given Cisco 7912 Series IP Phones, but two Cisco 7960 Series IP Phones were installed to provide operator-like call handling functions.

Having proven the underlying infrastructure, the remote working solution was introduced. Cisco IP VPN Client software was installed on each remote worker's laptop or PC. This creates secure connections, or tunnels, over the Internet back to the office LAN. Protection from external attack is provided by the enterprise-class firewall within the Cisco 2800 Series ISR.

In most cases people already had broadband ADSL access but, where necessary, links were easily upgraded. The IPSec security protocol used is industry standard and it did not matter whether people's connections were BT-provided or not.

Not only do the secure tunnels provide access to the company's data and business applications, including its back-office project management system, they also extend the IP telephony system into people's homes. The cost of supplying an IP Phone to every remote worker was avoided by installing Cisco IP Communicator, a soft phone that runs on a PC or laptop. People can make and receive calls using a USB headset and microphone just as if they were on an office extension. The Internet-quality voice service provided is satisfactory for remote users' requirements.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Caseworks was quick to appreciate the flexibility of IP telephony. There was no need to even re-program the system for hot desking as people moving between desks simply plug their IP Phones (or laptop with soft phone) into the nearest LAN outlet. The ability to turn on new features within the ISR router has been used to create a wireless LAN. Not only has it added a new dimension to hot desking, but also secure wireless Internet access for visiting clients is much appreciated.

“The business has grown by building long-term relationships with clients who value our consistently high quality and the support we provide. Those standards can only be maintained by attracting and retaining high calibre people, so helping them to improve their work life balance is a crucial aspect.”

—Phil Lumb, Managing Director, Caseworks

Caseworks gave the go-ahead for the new solution only after a detailed cost/benefit analysis. The capital cost of moving offices would have been £10,000 with an increase in current account costs of £24,000 per annum. To set against that, Caseworks incurred a capital cost of around £5,000 for additional hardware while the lease on the Cisco Unified CallManager Express is £658 per month. The managed service from BT works out at an extra cost of around £6 per day. Additional network services, primarily ADSL connections for the six remote workers, total around £120 per month.

“On a current account cash basis alone our annual return on investment is 53 per cent, compared with moving office, plus we saved £5,000 in capital expenditure,” says Tony. “We measure our people's output and we expect to see productivity improvements, but we have no data as yet. However, that will inevitably add further to the ROI.”

The company feels that, while the financial benefits of the new solution were important, the true significance of its converged solution lies elsewhere. Managed Unified Communications has provided a means to grow the business to the next level.

“The business has grown by building long-term relationships with clients who value our consistently high quality and the support we provide,” concludes Phil. “Those standards can only be maintained by attracting and retaining high calibre people, so helping them to improve their work life balance is a crucial aspect.”

BT AND CISCO WORKING TOGETHER

Caseworks is one of a rapidly growing number of small companies that are taking advantage of the benefits of IP communications.

Darren Chatterley, BT's IP Telephony Solution Product Manager, explains: "IP-based solutions for small and medium businesses is a huge focus for BT. In the past companies justified IP telephony on purely cost grounds. Now companies understand that the feature richness it offers opens the door to new possibilities and delivers real business benefits that can only be achieved with converged solutions. Currently the balance between new IP handsets and traditional ones is about 50:50. In a year, that balance will have swung in favour of IP."

In meeting the needs of this growing market, BT is working closely with Cisco using products from the Cisco Unified Communications portfolio, designed to provide end-to-end solutions that can evolve to meet a company's changing business needs.

BT and Cisco have worked together for over 20 years and Darren Chatterley believes that together the two companies offer a unique mix of skills and features. "Cisco has been very proactive in driving the market for converged applications and is a world leader in IP," he says. "BT brings to the mix its global expertise in local and wide area networks and business grade telephony together with new applications, deployment and ongoing service management. Working together we provide the feature rich, cost effective, hassle free solutions that companies – large and small – are increasingly looking for."



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