

CISCO TECHNOLOGY HELPS UK BUSINESS LAND PAN-EUROPEAN CONTRACTS AND BUILD INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CULTURE

A 30-strong UK company is winning pan-European contracts and creating a more international culture within its business with the help of a Cisco Unified Communications solution.

Support rapid international business expansion



Pradera, a UK based company founded in 1999, is a specialist management company which invests in and manages out-of-town retail property in continental Europe. Its portfolio comprises either existing or new developments at values ranging from £20 million to £100 million per property. Pradera manages more than 17 properties accommodating more than 650 tenants in locations such as shopping centres, retail warehouse parks and entertainment centres. Units that Pradera invests in and manage range from kiosks to 12,000 square metres and include hypermarkets, multiplex cinemas and DIY stores, for example retail outlets in the same sites of supermarket chains like Carrefour in France. The company has 30 staff in offices in Luxembourg, London, Madrid, Milan and Athens.

Despite steady growth over the last few years, Pradera plans to expand its business by up to 75 percent both in terms of employees and property investments which currently stand at £512 million. In addition, the company hopes to set up new offices in Istanbul and Warsaw or Prague.

“Efficient and effective communication between our offices is essential,” says John Glassett, property director for Pradera. “It is very important that our staff in our remote offices talk to us in London and between each other. The key is to make sure staff are not working independently of each other especially when we’re dealing with multinational clients. However, travel is becoming increasingly expensive and so much less attractive to us as a business. As a group, we spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on staff travelling around Europe.”

The kind of retailer Pradera is dealing with will be European or even international and the company needs to be able to communicate effectively in each region. Each of Pradera’s offices has its own accounting and property management capability with the London office providing centralised functions. But an accountant in Luxembourg needs to be able to talk to one in Athens so that as a single entity, Pradera can services its multinational clients.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Pradera

INDUSTRY

- Business Services

BUSINESS SIZE

- Small Business

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Support rapid business expansion
- Improve communications between international branch offices
- Create a more unified, international business culture

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco Unified Communications

BUSINESS VALUE

- Supports winning of new business contracts
- Enables best practice to be shared across European regions
- Helps to create an international feel to local offices
- Helps to reduce international travel costs

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Cisco delivers reliable communications

The company was using a standard telephone system, but as Glassett says, “You would often have to encourage people to pick up the phone and talk to colleagues and customers in other countries because finding the right country codes and dialling long, complex numbers could be a disincentive to quick and efficient communication.”

Pradera has deployed a Cisco Unified Communications solution that is based on a Cisco foundation network of Local Area Networks (LANs) in each European office linked together by a Wide Area Network (WAN). This network supports a Cisco Unified telephony system with 40 Cisco Unified handsets distributed around the offices.

Glassett says, “We’ve been using Cisco technology for our foundation network for a number of years. We have found that Cisco provides good quality equipment which rarely goes wrong. For the telephony solution it made sense to go with Cisco because it integrates well with the existing foundation network and because we wanted something that we knew would be reliable.”

The Cisco solution at Pradera was implemented by Atlanta Technology Ltd, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner.

Cisco helps win international business

Glassett says, “The benefit of using the Cisco Unified Communications system is that we can easily share best practice across all our offices and that we can leverage good relationships in one region so that they become common across the whole business.”

Glassett says, “For example, we won a deal with a retailer in Greece as a result of a relationship we have with the same company in Spain, although initially we didn’t have a strong relationship with the Greek arm of the business. So having a good communication system in place makes it much easier to transfer that relationship to other parts of Europe. Basically, we wouldn’t have had the edge on the business and it would have been harder to win without the Cisco technology.”

Pradera also expects to start seeing a reduction in the cost of telephone bills because many calls that were charged at international call rates are now being carried over the Cisco Unified Communications network and, as a result, do not incur call charges.

The Cisco solution has meant that simple actions, such as making a telephone call are much easier. Staff need only dial an extension number to contact another member of staff in the next office or the other side of Europe.

Glassett says that simpler communications means that knowledge transfer is now much easier because a member of staff in one office can quickly contact someone in another office to get and share advice. “We try to make sure that the business is constantly in touch and that we can present an international perspective to our customers.”

As well as improving voice communication, the Cisco network infrastructure had also increased data transfer and improved information sharing between offices. Glassett also believes that the Cisco Unified Communications system will start to reduce travel cost as staff start to find it increasingly easy and more efficient to use technology to communicate.

The Cisco solution is also helping Pradera expand its business, because the infrastructure design has already been created and only has to be replicated at each new location. For a new office, all that is required is a network connection and then PCs and even telephone handsets can be plugged into the network.

In the future Pradera is looking at using video conferencing facilities in rooms eventually moving to desk-to-desk conferencing, which will help to improve communication and familiarity between staff and also reduce further the need for international travel.

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John Glassett
Property Director
Pradera

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