

CISCO IP NETWORK SET TO DELIVER 100% ROI TO ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS IN A YEAR

Faced with restricted planning permission on its listed building and the need to improve the network infrastructure, the Royal Academy of Arts turned to Cisco Systems for a solution that promises to deliver a 100 percent ROI in just one year.

IP technology protects Royal Academy of Arts listed building

Around one million people visit the Royal Academy of Arts in London every year. Based in its prestigious, listed building - Burlington House, Piccadilly - the RA is the oldest arts organisations in the UK. It was founded in 1768, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, the famous painter, as its first president. Its temporary exhibition - *Monet in the 20th Century* - attracted over 800,000 visitors, making it the most popular art exhibition held in the UK. It also has one of the largest friends membership schemes – 87,000 - of any artistic organisation in the UK. The RA's mission is to promote art and architecture through its collection, exhibitions and education programme and present this to the widest audience possible. Highlights of the forthcoming programme include Ancient Art to Post impressionism; Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years; and William Nicholson (1872- 1949): British Painter and Printmaster.

The RA had three administrative sites in London, but consolidated these into two - Burlington House where exhibitions are held and French Railways House on the opposite side of Piccadilly where the RA now occupies three floors for administration. The existing data network was only capable of a mega-stream between the buildings and a separate PBX system managed telephony. In order to increase capacity and extend new telephony systems to the French Railways site, it would cost a significant amount of money to do all the cabling and extend the telephony system around French Railways House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Royal Academy of Arts

INDUSTRY

- Culture

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Upgrade and improve the performance of its network capability
- Develop a new extended network in a listed building with strict planning regulations
- Improve data sharing to accommodate high-volume image applications

NETWORK SOLUTION

- An integrated data and telephony network using Cisco IP technology
- Cisco's wireless capability use for telephony and public information kiosks

BUSINESS VALUE

- 100 percent return on investment in one year
- £250,000 saving over three years
- Sharing information such as high-volume images, is much easier and much faster
- IP and wireless technology reduces need for cabling in a listed building
- Wireless IP telephones improve gallery security

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David Aston, IT director, Royal Academy of Arts

While Burlington House is a huge aesthetic asset to the RA, as a listed building, alterations such as re-cabling are restricted and can take a long time to get approved. Nevertheless, the RA needed a faster data network, it needed to integrate new offices in French Railways House and it realised there were savings to be made by upgrading its telephony system to an IP infrastructure.

Cisco regarded as "the best provider of IP networking"

To help develop a solution, the RA turned to Cisco Systems. David Aston, IT director, RA, says, "Cisco is regarded as the best provider of IP networking and at the RA, our policy is, if we can afford it we buy the best. Cisco’s IP telephony solution is much better than that of other suppliers because of its functionality and integration with the network infrastructure. Software and add-ons from Cisco and its partners are very good."

Aston adds, "Also, Cisco technology is very transferable so it’s easy to get someone skilled, whereas getting someone qualified in other suppliers’ kit is a lot more difficult. This is very important to us."

An integrated IP data and voice system offered the RA the best solution. It would significantly simplify physical cabling since it would mean putting the least amount of new cables into a listed building. Also, the RA could not dig up Piccadilly to connect its two London sites. It solved this problem with a wireless bridge between the two buildings supported by the IP network.

The infrastructure links up 180 PCs, 16 wireless access points, 100 fixed line, and three wireless IP telephones across the RA’s two Piccadilly sites. This will expand to include a further 80 fixed-line and up to 10 wireless IP telephones, and a new building at the back of Burlington House which was recently acquired by the RA.

Cisco delivers ROI and improves performance

For the RA, its Cisco IP data and voice network has meant significant financial savings and improvements in day-to-day operations. By upgrading the network, introducing IP telephones, reducing the amount of cabling needed and improving network management, the RA expects to save £250,000 over the next three years – a 100 percent return on investment in 12 to 18 months.

Besides general administration, the RA has a number of unique functions that use the IP network. The RA is in the process of putting all its art collection on-line, making it widely available to the public for the first time. With each original image comprising a 40MB file and the total amount expected to be half a terabyte, the capacity of the Cisco network has been essential to managing the project. In addition, some of the RA’s temporary exhibitions will also be available on-line. The RA also has a number of in-house architects exchanging CAD drawings over the network. Even so, the RA uses about two percent of the network’s capacity and no more than 30 percent at peak demand.

The network has enabled RA staff to do many existing tasks faster and even revealed new time and money-saving activities. For example, sending images around the organisation used to take 10 minutes, now it happens in seconds, and sending images to publishers can now be done from the desktop rather than via a separate ISDN line.

The Cisco network has also had an impact on IT services. It is now possible to deploy new and upgrade software via the network to PCs, a significant time and labour saving from having to go to each PC with a CD. Also, operations such as backing up PCs across the network and downloading service packs from the Internet are now much quicker and efficient.

The Cisco network has also helped the RA introduce wireless capability – an essential feature for a listed building where introducing new cabling is limited. Currently, there are a number of kiosks at the RA used by visitors to access additional information about a painting they have just seen. These are hard-wired, but will soon be wireless so that they can be moved to areas where there are no cables, but where they are most useful to visitors.

IP wireless telephones - carried by security staff patrolling the Burlington House fine art galleries - have meant less re-wiring, less disruption for visitors, but improved security. "The beauty of the mobile security IP phones is that you can make and receive external calls and call direct to internal extensions. Security staff can now make calls direct to the emergency services rather than having to radio someone to make the call. It speeds up the whole process and improves security," says Aston.

In addition, security staff in the galleries no longer need to have radios that are constantly hissing and crackling - which could be obtrusive to visitors - or mobile phones which meant paying for internal calls.

"Being able to integrate the Cisco IP telephony system with the network has been a major bonus for the RA," says Aston. "Moving or changing locations is so much quicker and easier and we don't have to re-wire any new buildings such as the new Burlington Garden site because the IP phones can use existing data cables."

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