

## Building a Responsive Support Community for Diabetes Patients

Diabetes Society depends on Cisco solutions to provide more responsive service to clients and help employees be more productive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p><b>DIABETES SOCIETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry: Education</li> <li>• Location: San Jose, CA</li> <li>• Number of Employees: 35 employees</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide reliable, responsive phone and data communication and messaging for diabetes patients, physicians, and staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESULTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependable, feature-rich voice and data network helps clients communicate better and faster with physicians and staff, while helping employees be more productive and responsive</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOLUTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisco Unified Communications solutions deliver voice and data communications, messaging, and support for secure wireless connectivity on a single, secure, manageable platform</li> </ul>

### Challenge

The Diabetes Society is a central repository for diabetes education and support, and serves 20,000 people annually. With a staff of 35, the organization is dedicated to teaching people with diabetes how to live healthy lives and avoid severe complications of the disease. Communication plays a key part in the Society’s educational efforts. The organization depends on its phone system, website, and email to help clients schedule appointments with physicians, learn about events and activities, and enroll in camping programs. When the organization’s aging analog phone system began to have reliability and performance problems, the staff realized that they had to make a change to continue meeting clients’ needs.

“The voice system was failing,” says Thomas Smith, acting executive director of the Diabetes Society. “I would call people, and they couldn’t hear me because of line interference, so I had to start using my cell phone in the office. Voice messages were getting lost or sometimes delayed by one or two days.”

Physicians who work with the Society were becoming frustrated too. They would refer patients to the organization for education, only to find that their messages had been lost or delayed. “Our communication problems gave people the impression that we didn’t care about them, which was absolutely not the case,” says Smith.

The Society’s phone system consisted of a hodgepodge of components from different vendors, including an aging private branch exchange (PBX) system that was difficult and expensive to manage and maintain.

“Over time, as employees came and went, we found that we could not maintain an accurate, up-to-date directory,” says Hoa Vo, IT Coordinator at the Diabetes Society. “All incoming calls would arrive at the front desk, and the receptionist had to manually transfer every call to the right extension.”

The Diabetes Society needed to replace its system with a reliable communications solution that could provide the voice messaging, call-handling features, and reliability that the Society needed.

Instead of a mix of different devices, the Society wanted a complete solution from a single vendor that would be easier to manage and maintain.

“One of our goals was to allow our front desk person to be able to multitask, and free her from having to pick up every call that comes in. With the new system, we have the capability now for staff to have their own direct number to give callers the choice of connecting to the front desk or directing themselves to the correct extension.”

– Hoa Vo, IT Coordinator, Diabetes Society

## Results

The Diabetes Society chose a Cisco® Unified Communications solution to bring all of its voice and data communication together in a single system that is easy to use and manage. The new solution gives staff the confidence that voice messages will arrive promptly, so they can give clients the prompt attention they deserve.

“With the old system, sometimes the phones’ message lamps would fail to turn on when a message had arrived,” says Vo. “People had to check their voicemails several times a day to be sure they hadn’t missed an important or time-sensitive call.”

Using the new Cisco solution, staff members are notified the instant that a message arrives, on their desktop phone, cell phone, or via email. They can also browse, manage, send, and listen to messages using their Cisco IP Unified Phone display. Instead of spending time tracking down lost messages, staff can focus on serving clients better.

The new solution is also helping the Society’s receptionist save time and be more productive.

“One of our goals was to allow our front desk person to be able to multitask, and free her from having to pick up every call that comes in,” says Vo. “With the new system, we have the capability now for staff to have their own direct number to give callers the choice of connecting to the front desk or directing themselves to the correct extension.”

The Society’s clients are saving time as well, because the flexible Cisco Unified Communications solution helps them reach the person or department they need, without being placed on hold or having their calls transferred.

“Our seasonal camping program generates more than half of the phone calls that come into our office,” says Smith. “Our new system lets callers dial directly into our camping department, to reach the people they need faster.”

Managing the phone system is easier too, because staff no longer have to wait for a phone technician to set up new extensions, move a line, or reset a password. With the Cisco solution, common management tasks can be handled within hours.

“Making changes to the phone system used to take days, if not weeks, because our phone system was maintained by a volunteer,” says Vo. “We had to rely on his schedule and when he was available to come into the office. With our new Cisco solution, if someone changes offices, we can simply move their phone to the new location, plug it in, and the extension will be up and running. The difference is significant.”

## Solution

The Diabetes Society chose a solution based on a Cisco network featuring the Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business. The all-in-one solution supports voice, data, voicemail, Automated Attendant, video, security, and wireless capabilities. Placing all of the Society's communications on one network, from one vendor, eases management and helps the organization control costs.

"Our old system was built on devices from several different vendors, and to manage the system, you had to be familiar with a different management tool for each component," says Vo. "With the Cisco system, we have just one entry point."

"If something went wrong, we had to identify the right person to work on the issue," says Smith. "With the Cisco solution, we no longer have that issue. It was also more cost-effective for us to operate an all-in-one solution, which was very important to us as a nonprofit organization."

In the past, to make changes to the network, a technician would have to be on-site at a computer terminal, or making configuration changes using a phone's LCD display screen. The Cisco solution can be managed remotely and securely.

"We simply establish a virtual private network (VPN) tunnel into the network and from there, we can have access to the graphic web interface and manage users and mailboxes that way," says Vo. "It's a lot easier than configuring the system over a small phone display, which could be very frustrating."

The Society also uses the solution's secure remote access features to help employees and business partners work productively when they are outside the office.

"We have a contractor who handles our finances, and I set up a VPN connection from her remote location to access the network and work with our budget files," says Vo. "We also have educators working outside the office who need to access information from our network."

The Cisco solution includes built-in support for secure wireless networking, which is a big help for visitors who need access to network resources.

"A lot of pharmaceutical vendors come through our doors, and they often need access to the Internet or their own office networks," says Vo. "We can give them the access that they need without compromising our own network security."

## Next Steps

The Diabetes Society has helped thousands of clients cope with the disease through its educational efforts and other activities. The organization is constantly growing and evolving, and its Cisco solution is designed to scale easily to take on new users, regardless of where they are located.

"We acquired some additional space on the second floor of our building, and we hope to expand our operations," says Smith. "Over the long term, we want to open up another office in the Los Angeles area as well. We intend to use our Cisco Unified Communications solution to keep both offices in touch."

## For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solutions for small business, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smallbusiness> or contact your authorized Cisco salesperson.



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