



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

ORACLE USES IP CONFERENCING TO REDUCE COSTS AND IMPROVE USER EXPERIENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Oracle Corporation

INDUSTRY

- Software

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Reduce international and domestic conferencing costs
- Increase productivity by simplifying voice conferencing
- Minimize internal resource requirements for conferencing solution

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco MeetingPlace
- Cisco CallManager
- Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service
- Cisco 3750 Routers
- Cisco 5850 and Cisco 5400 Voice Gateways
- Cisco IP Phones
- Cisco IP Communicator

BUSINESS VALUE

- Oracle saved more than \$1 million in toll charges in the first quarter
- Employees can easily join conferences anywhere in the world by dialing a local access number
- Outsourcing administration and help desk support for the on-site solution

Since deploying interconnected Cisco MeetingPlace servers on three continents, Oracle Corporation can route domestic and international audio-conferencing traffic over its own IP network, helping to simplify the user experience and save more than US\$1 million in the first quarter of use.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

At Oracle Corporation, voice conferencing among employees around the world is crucial for collaborative business decisions. Conferencing volume—which totals millions of minutes per month for 40,000-plus employees—is growing steadily and has made the importance of the cost and usability of the conferencing system a business priority.

In 2002, Oracle began outsourcing conferencing to a voice conferencing service bureau. “The simplicity of outsourcing was an advantage,” says Hal Miller, voice manager for the Americas at Oracle. “But the service did not meet our needs for international voice conferencing or availability.” Conference participants outside the United States incurred significant toll charges. Domestic toll charges were also higher than expected because employees participating in conferences from home were often required to dial a long-distance number, and then submitted the expense for reimbursement. Employee satisfaction suffered because employees had to dial different access numbers and meeting IDs based on how the meeting was set up and the location of the conference host. Compounding the problem, adding and deleting user profiles required calling the service bureau and waiting for the changes to take effect. This frequently delayed new employees’ ability to access the system and thus impeded productivity.

To reduce the costs and complexity of conferencing, Oracle decided to transition from its conferencing service bureau to an on-premises, global, IP-based conferencing solution. “Oracle had already invested in IP telephony, so it made good business sense to capitalize on the investment for voice conferencing, as well,” says Randy Cook, director of global voice at Oracle. “By running conferencing traffic over our internal network, we would significantly reduce the domestic and international toll charges associated with conferencing, as well as conferencing service fees, to save several million dollars annually.”

Requirements for the conferencing solution included:

- Interoperating with Oracle’s IP telephony infrastructure, including Cisco® CallManager, Cisco IP phones, and Cisco IP Communicator
- Minimizing internal resource requirements for system administration and user support
- Simplifying the user experience by providing a single access number to join conferences hosted in any location
- Integrating with Oracle’s corporate directory through lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) and Oracle Calendar
- Keeping costs constant by eliminating per-conference fees
- Providing one bill for all conferencing-related charges

Cisco Systems, Inc.

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SOLUTION

After evaluating leading conferencing solutions, Oracle selected Cisco MeetingPlace®. The company purchased the equipment and software and deployed it on the corporate network. It outsourced architecture design, implementation, administration, and end-user help desk support to Cisco Systems® through the Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service. “We blended the best of both worlds: the cost savings from sending conferencing traffic over our own network, and the simplicity of outsourcing solution administration and support,” says Miller.

Of all the solutions that Oracle considered, only Cisco MeetingPlace met Oracle’s three primary requirements. “First, Cisco MeetingPlace is IP-based,” says Cook. “That’s important to Oracle because it means we can integrate conferencing with Cisco CallManager to route voice calls over our IP network, and eventually integrate with Oracle applications for collaboration. Second, only Cisco offered a managed service for an onsite conferencing solution, which minimizes internal resource requirements. And third, only the Cisco solution enabled us to combine international and domestic conferencing capabilities.” Cook notes that many companies deploy a domestic conferencing solution first and then add a separate international component. “Compared to separate domestic and international systems, Cisco MeetingPlace provides the same functionality and greater ease of use, with half the equipment and administration requirements,” he says.

Global Deployment

In June 2004, Oracle and Cisco deployed the Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service to Oracle employees around the world. Three Cisco MeetingPlace hubs with a combined total capacity of nearly 3000 ports reside in California, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

Cisco MeetingPlace supports Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), which creates two important advantages for Oracle. The first is that SIP is a widely supported standard that provides a common base for call control applications. For example, to form a consistent call-processing foundation, Oracle uses Cisco voice gateways to convert time-division multiplexing (TDM) calls to SIP/Real-Time Transport Protocol (SIP/RTP), and then to combine these calls with native SIP/RTP calls. The second advantage is that once all calls are in SIP/RTP format, SIP improves the user experience with powerful features such as transparent call forwarding. The result: when Oracle employees dial their local hub and enter the meeting ID, the local Cisco MeetingPlace server automatically identifies the site that owns the meeting, and uses SIP to route the call over the Oracle WAN to the host server. “The three hubs interact with each other to create a simple user experience and eliminate carrier long-distance charges,” says Miller.

Communications Resilience

To ensure the highest level of availability for reservationless conferences, an additional 960 ports are reserved for disaster recovery. A hot standby server at Oracle headquarters provides failover for all other servers worldwide. If a component in the voice chain becomes unavailable, the voice path is automatically redirected to the failover server. This capability is made possible through a combination of SIP, Cisco MeetingPlace failover capabilities, and custom configuration by the Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service team.

Customization

The Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service team worked with Oracle to customize the Cisco MeetingPlace solution to meet Oracle’s unique business needs. Examples of customization include failover among the global servers, integration with Oracle’s corporate directory to simplify administration and facilitate user access, and Extensible Markup Language (XML)-based billing capabilities that allow Oracle to import billing data into its financial system.

Rapid Adoption

To help Oracle realize its cost-savings goals as quickly as possible, the Cisco MeetingPlace Managed Service team implemented a custom deployment program based on the Cisco Return on Investment (ROI) Realization—Rapid Adoption Plan (RAP). A Cisco application consultant worked with Oracle to implement the plan, which included deploying Cisco MeetingPlace worldwide and promoting awareness and adoption. During the first 90 days after deployment, employees learned about Cisco MeetingPlace through e-mail campaigns and a user-help Website.

The next phase will involve working with individual groups to show how Cisco MeetingPlace can help improve business processes. “Our users were quick to learn the system and adoption has grown steadily,” says Miller.

RESULTS

Cost Savings

In the first full quarter since transitioning to Cisco MeetingPlace worldwide, Oracle saved more than \$1 million, and total cost savings for 2005 are projected at \$4.5 million “The global deployment creates large savings because it eliminates international tolls for conferencing as well as service bureau fees,” says Miller. In addition, because Oracle owns its Cisco MeetingPlace servers, costs are more predictable: the company no longer faces rising service fees as its conferencing volume grows.

Increased User Satisfaction

Scheduling and participating in conference calls has become much simpler. All employees now have their own personal meeting ID, which makes it easier to initiate and attend meetings. No matter where the conference is hosted, employees dial the same, familiar number of the Cisco MeetingPlace server closest to them. The result has been that conferencing use and collaboration has increased significantly.

Employees also like the ability to manage their voice conferencing from the Cisco MeetingPlace Web interface. “Users can see all participants, note who is speaking, and manage the meeting more effectively by muting and unmuting participants,” says Cook.

Lower Administration Costs

“By outsourcing administration and help-desk support to Cisco, Oracle has achieved savings without any additional headcount,” says Miller. In addition, as a result of integrating with Oracle’s corporate directory, any employee adds, changes, or deletions entered into the corporate LDAP directory are now automatically propagated to Cisco MeetingPlace. This has completely eliminated the administrative burden and delays associated with calling the service bureau.

Dependable Support

Oracle is pleased with the service that its Cisco support team provides. “The Cisco team is diligent about making sure the solution is running with optimum performance at all times,” says Miller. Cook agrees: “We have an exceptional support team at Cisco for both the data network and IP telephony.”

“My approach to voice conferencing was to reduce costs,” says Cook. “Since we had already invested in Cisco CallManager for voice over IP (VoIP), also using the network to carry voice conferencing traffic makes good economic sense. The Cisco MeetingPlace platform and managed services business model further optimizes our savings.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Cisco IP Communications, visit: www.cisco.com/go/ipc

For more information about Cisco MeetingPlace, visit: www.cisco.com/go/meetingplace

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