

Delivering Complete, Hosted Communications Solutions for Customers

Cincinnati Bell's Cisco-powered Emerge solution simplifies voice services for small business.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>CINCINNATI BELL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry: Telecommunications • Employees: 3000 • Location: Cincinnati, Ohio <p>TRENDY MINDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry: Professional Services • Employees: 14 • Location: Indianapolis, Indiana
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable feature-rich, easy-to-manage hosted voice and data communications solution for small and medium-sized business customers • Deliver single-vendor solution to small businesses that combines connectivity, service, support, and equipment
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted solution enables Cincinnati Bell to deploy hosted telephony services to small businesses with confidence and ease • Rich feature set supports dynamic workforce with call handling, mobility support, and messaging features
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Hosted Small Business (HSB) Communications solution gives customers single point of contact for optimal performance, more knowledgeable service, and fast resolution of issues • Solution allows Cincinnati Bell to deliver its robust Emerge service, which promises next-generation technology, geographic freedom, and reliable business continuity to business customers

Challenge

As businesses and their customers become more sophisticated and mobile, their communication needs are changing. Nowadays, even small organizations expect the same rich phone and messaging features that large companies enjoy. Because growing businesses often have limited IT resources, they need a dependable solution, supported by a single point of contact should any issues arise.

“Deploying a single-vendor solution for a hosted service helps eliminate any finger-pointing, for us as well as the customer,” says Brad Loomis, product manager at Cincinnati Bell. “Our customers need to be confident that their system just works, and consistently delivers the features they expect.”

To meet these needs, Cincinnati Bell, one of the nation's leading local exchange and wireless providers, introduced Emerge. The Emerge hosted voice and data communications service provides small and medium businesses with greater control of their day-to-day business communications.

To optimize its solution offering, Cincinnati Bell needed customer premises equipment (CPE) that was fast and easy to install, manage, and maintain.

“Our previous solution was based on a mix of equipment from different vendors, which created a risk of interoperability and reliability issues,” says Loomis. “Provisioning the phones at the customer's site was also very cumbersome. On our previous system, we had to manually type in network information on each handset, using the phone's keypad. It might take us 15 minutes to set up a single phone.”

Cincinnati Bell also needed a modular solution that would be easy to scale and update to meet customers' changing business needs.

Results

To support its Emerge hosted voice and data communications offering, Cincinnati Bell chose the Cisco® Hosted Small Business (HSB) Communications solution, a fully tested infrastructure consisting of Cisco routers, switches, and IP phones, working smoothly together with major third-party call control platforms to enable end-to-end service deployments. By choosing a proven, ready-made solution, Cincinnati Bell can remove the guesswork involved in cobbling together a CPE solution from multiple vendors.

Setting up the solution is simple, because the Cisco solution lets Cincinnati Bell rapidly deploy and configure services to the Cisco customer premises equipment with little or no onsite intervention.

“The Cisco solution has simplified phone provisioning tremendously,” says Loomis. “We use our DNS server to set up the phones in minutes instead of hours. All we have to do is run a web link to the phones, and the system reboots, updates the firmware, and configures itself.”

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With its reliable, easy-to-manage customer premises solution in place, Cincinnati Bell can focus on delivering the service and features that customers demand. For example, TrendyMinds, a full-service advertising and PR agency, adopted the Emerge service to support its headquarters in Indianapolis. The company was working on an advertising project for Cincinnati Bell, and liked the Emerge solution so much that they decided to acquire it for their own business. The hosted offering provided TrendyMinds with a complete, single-source set of solutions and services, and was easy to purchase with minimal upfront costs.

“We needed a solution that would make it easy for us to take calls and messages wherever we were working,” says Trevor Yager, Principal and CEO at TrendyMinds. “We don’t have a dedicated receptionist, and our employees are often out of the office at client meetings or running errands, so mobility support was key for us.”

The Emerge solution, based on Cisco technology, lets TrendyMinds forward incoming calls to employees’ cell phones when they are working outside the office. Now, clients can quickly reach staff no matter where they are working.

“A couple months ago we decided to go to an office picnic across the street, and we didn’t have to ask anyone to stay in the office to handle calls,” says Yager. “We could simply forward the calls to our cell phones, and nobody had to stay behind and be left out.”

The solution also supports intelligent messaging features that help TrendyMinds respond more quickly to customers, using the device that’s most convenient for them.

“We love the ability to receive voice messages over email,” says Yager. “Most of our employees are mobile, and bring their laptops to meetings. We don’t necessarily have our office phones near us, so it’s really nice to be able to get your messages on email and listen to them as soon as they arrive. We can even play back a message on our mobile devices.”

Sharing messages is simple as well, because the Emerge solution, based on Cisco technology, lets employees forward voice messages as email attachments for faster action.

“We have a general voice mailbox, and if a general inquiry comes in, we can pass the message around the company through email and figure out who is best able to respond,” says Yager.

Because the Emerge solution is a hosted service, TrendyMinds can enjoy complete peace of mind in knowing that their solution will deliver consistent, reliable communications.

“It’s great to have just one vendor who can handle all of our needs,” says Yager. “It has definitely simplified all of our business communications.”

Solution

The Cisco HSB Communications provides Cincinnati Bell with a proven infrastructure for customers, from a single source, all designed to work together smoothly and reliably. To meet its specific requirements, Cincinnati Bell chose Cisco Integrated Access Device (IAD) platforms to terminate their service at the small business customer premise. The Cisco IAD delivers a rich combination of data, toll-quality analog or digital voice, security, and wireless services, in a scalable solution that can grow and change as needed.

“Scaling and upgrading customer equipment is easy,” says Loomis. “If a customer wants to expand capacity, it is often as easy as adding a card to the platform.”

Cisco ESW Series Switches complement the solution, by extending network connectivity throughout customers’ offices. These managed Ethernet switches deliver wire-speed Fast Ethernet and Gigabit Ethernet connectivity,

integrated security, quality of service (QoS), and Power over Ethernet (PoE) to support all of Cincinnati Bell customers' needs.

Cisco SPA500 Series Unified IP Phones complete the solution. Affordable, reliable, and easy to use, they let small business customers smoothly connect employees and offices, offer application support to enhance productivity, and encryption for security.

The versatile Cisco solution lets Cincinnati Bell deliver next-generation technology, freedom and mobility anywhere, and reliable business continuity to its business customers. And it offers all the powerful, built-in communications features that customers expect.

"One great function that customers love is the office paging capability," says Loomis. "Other solutions did not include that. Our Cisco solution lets us offer it as a free feature for customers, without additional licensing fee. It's a huge benefit."

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco IAD Series Integrated Access Devices
- Cisco Small Business Pro ESW Series Switches
- Cisco SPA500 Series Unified IP Phones

Cincinnati Bell worked closely with TrendyMinds to understand its business and be sure that its system aligned closely with its business needs.

"We told Cincinnati Bell about the features we needed, and they were very helpful in showing us how to use the solution to our advantage," says Yager. "If an issue comes up, we know that they are there for us."

"Our hosted solution takes the headaches away from customers," says Loomis. "If the Cisco phone dies, we will replace it at no charge. And because the service resides in the cloud, even if power fails or the T1 goes down, voicemail and other applications will keep running until power is restored. Emerge will help ensure that customers never miss a call by easily re-routing calls to the employee's mobile phone."

By offering customers a single point of contact for all their communications, Cincinnati Bell can improve accountability and customer satisfaction, and build on a growing base of loyal clients for years to come.

For More Information

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



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