



Customer Case Study

Financial Services Company Improves Communication with Cisco Unified Communications

Beneficial Financial Group improved call center responsiveness and agent productivity, simultaneously reducing telephony costs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
BENEFICIAL FINANCIAL GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt Lake City, Utah, United States • Financial Services
BUSINESS CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver more responsive customer service, and increase call center agent productivity
NETWORK SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented Cisco Unified Communications
BUSINESS VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced telephone trunking costs by approximately \$3000 per month • Improved call center agent and management productivity • Reduced number of toll-free telephone numbers supported by 33 percent, and greatly simplified ability to conduct business with customers and field agents

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Beneficial Financial Group, based in Salt Lake City, Utah, offers individuals and businesses a variety of financial products and services, including life insurance and annuities, retirement planning, and strategies for business continuation, employee benefits, and executive compensation. A wide variety of other financial services and products are also made available through Beneficial’s strategic partners. Beneficial sells its products through 650 financial professionals in Utah, California, and several other western states. As of December 31, 2005, Beneficial had total assets of \$3.1 billion, and it wrote \$405 million of premiums in 2005.

The company had originally deployed a NEC private branch exchange (PBX) telephone switch to provide telephone service for its headquarters location. A separate call center takes calls related to the company’s portfolio of products for individuals—new business sales, advanced sales, customer service, claims, and agent compensation. This center relied on an Aspect PBX to provide telephone service for 70 call center representatives.

The separate PBX deployments made it difficult for call center agents to take and place calls, because there was no interoperability between the two systems. Call center managers were handicapped by an inflexible reporting and monitoring system that was difficult to access. The situation was just as confusing for policyholders and Beneficial Financial field representatives. There were 30 toll-free numbers to sort through, each with its own call tree options. Product agents and policyholders of the company’s group products did not have a call center.

In December 2003, NEC announced it was terminating support for Beneficial’s phone system. Fortunately, for several years Beneficial had been watching the development of IP telephony. Following its corporate technology policy that encouraged the use of innovative solutions, Beneficial decided to replace its two separate telephone systems with one, converged IP communications solution running on its corporate network. In addition to simplifying the jobs of call center agents, Beneficial wanted to help ensure that its telephone system could grow to enable the company to meet more of its customers’ financial services needs without having to be completely replaced.

Beneficial already used equipment from Cisco Systems® for its entire data network. When the company decided to implement IP communications to replace both phone systems, it solicited proposals from Cisco® and two other vendors for a converged network solution. Unlike the other proposals that offered hybrid solutions, the Cisco solution offered a complete, pure IP phone and communications system. SBC Datacomm, Beneficial’s integration vendor, had a good working relationship with Cisco and had participated in numerous successful implementations. Finally, Beneficial’s experience with its existing Cisco data network had been positive. These factors contributed to the company’s final decision to choose Cisco Unified Communications and upgrade its entire network. Within four months, the new network and IP communications solution were put into production.

Figure 1. Beneficial's Network Before Cisco Unified Communications

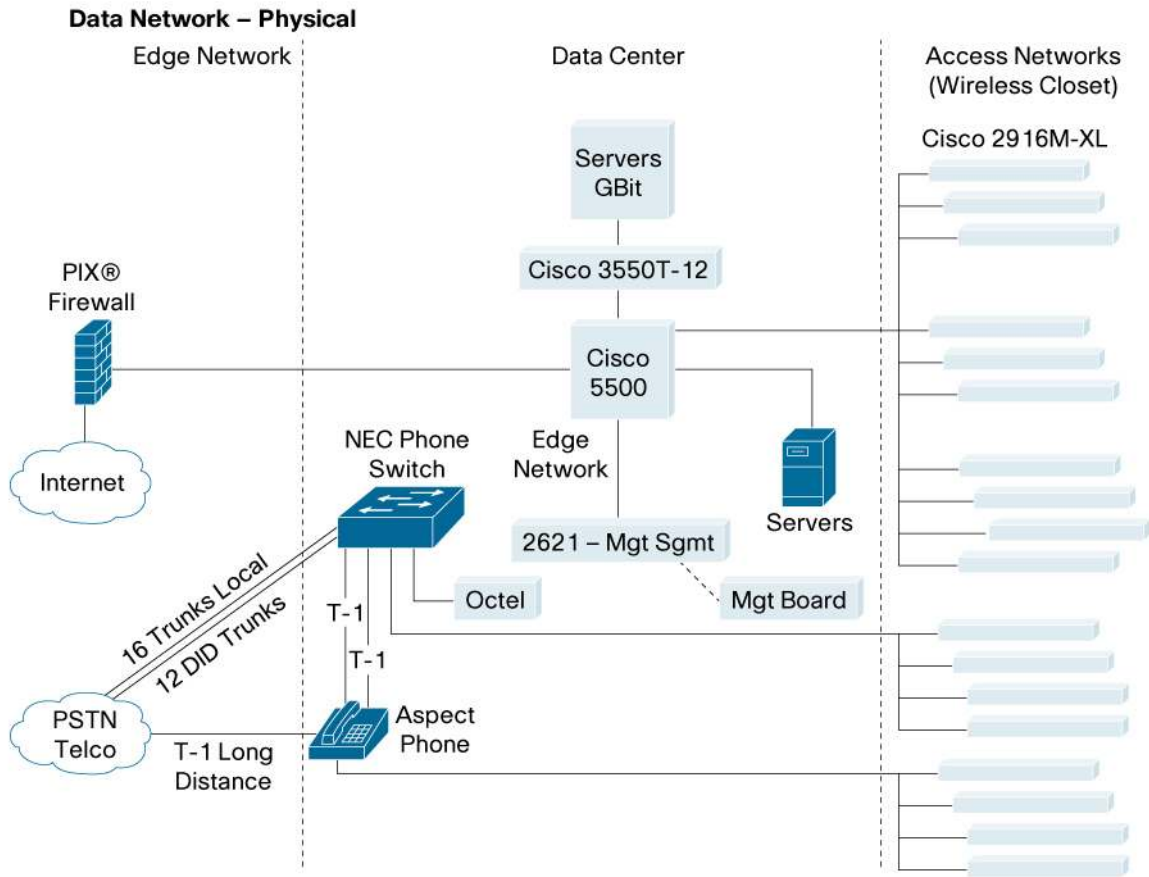
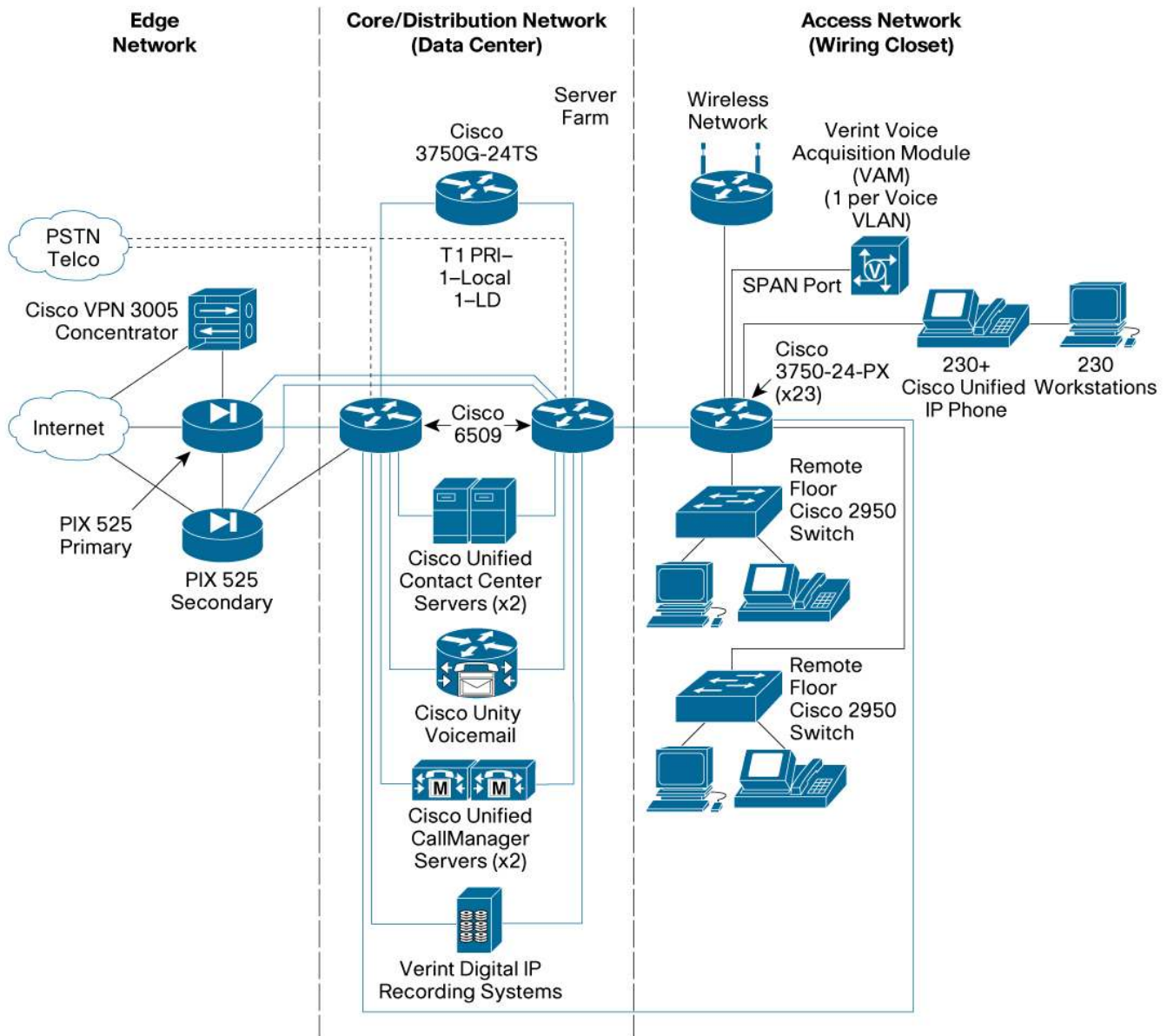


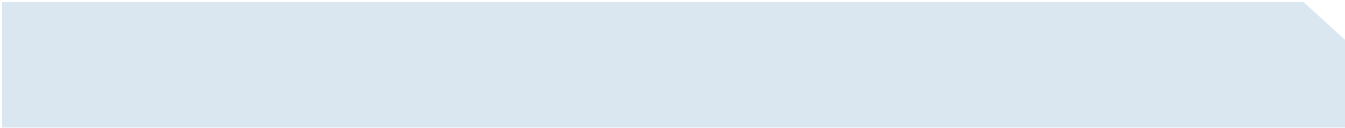
Figure 2. Beneficial's Network with Cisco Unified Communications



NETWORK SOLUTION

Because Beneficial planned to transition all of its users to the new network simultaneously, it asked SBC Datacomm to build a small-scale version of the actual voice data network before deploying the actual network. After equipment testing was completed in SBC Datacomm's Memphis laboratory, the equipment was shipped to Salt Lake City, where it was used in the full-scale network deployment.

Deployment went smoothly, and all Beneficial users received a one-hour training session. A "super-user" in each group of eight to ten users received more intensive training and served as a resource for the rest of the group. Users were given Cisco Unified IP phones one week before actual deployment.



In the network, Cisco Catalyst® 6509 Series Switches replaced Cisco Catalyst 5500 Series Switches. A Cisco Catalyst 3750G-24TS switch was deployed in the Beneficial data center. Approximately 230 workstations and Cisco Unified IP phones were connected through a Cisco Catalyst 3750-24-PX Switch, which was supported by Cisco Catalyst 2950 switches on individual building floors. Beneficial also implemented Cisco Unified CallManager, Cisco Unity® messaging, and the Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise, including the Cisco Agent Desktop and the Cisco Supervisor Desktop.

The actual switchover occurred over a weekend, and on Monday everything was surprisingly quiet. An SBC Telecomm team located onsite had little to do.

BUSINESS VALUE

Beneficial has received numerous benefits from its Cisco Unified Communication system. Across the company, most managers use Cisco Unity messaging to process their voicemail messages together with their e-mail messages. Managers have achieved more efficiency by being able to forward, add notes, or archive both voicemail and e-mail within Outlook.

Cost reduction has been an important benefit. Telephone trunking costs have been reduced by approximately \$3000 per month. Maintenance charges, licensing fees, and support costs associated with the old PBX systems have been eliminated. There are also significant savings associated with telephone moves, adds, and changes. Before the Cisco Unified Communications solution was deployed, skilled telephony personnel required three to four hours to move a telephone. Today, even a user can move his phone and simply plug it into a new location, and adding phones requires less than 30 minutes by a technician.

Security for both voice and data traffic has been improved. Security features built into the network enhance network, server, and desktop security. Beneficial has also improved its backup and restore, redundancy, and business continuity capabilities.

Beneficial's IT support desk and Group Insurance business unit have both deployed the Cisco Unified Contact Center solution. Each group is now able to provide a higher level of service to its respective customers—whether internal or external customers. In addition, support desk and Group Insurance managers are much better able to monitor staffing and service quality.

In Beneficial's call center, agents now use one telephone and one voicemail system, greatly simplifying communication with other groups in the company. The Cisco Unified CallManager Meet-Me conferencing capability has replaced an outside conferencing service, significantly reducing the cost of audio conferencing.

The company has also reduced the number of toll-free telephone numbers that it supports by 33 percent and greatly simplified its call tree structure. Both steps make it easier for customers and field agents to conduct business with the company. Managers gained easier access to reports and far more flexibility, resulting in timelier tracking of performance goals. The Cisco Unified Contact Center solution enables managers to track individual service levels, which changed the incentive compensation plan of the company's call center representatives. Today, compensation is reflected directly by the service levels that an agent provides. For example, answering 80 percent of calls within 30 seconds improves an agent's compensation. New or modified call scripts can also be created quickly and inexpensively.

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Catalyst 6509, 3750, and 2950 Series Switches
- Cisco Unified Communications, including Cisco Unified CallManager, Cisco Unity messaging, and Cisco Unified Contact Center

NEXT STEPS

Beneficial is actively considering additional capabilities offered by the Cisco Unified Communication system. Plans include enabling agents and policyholders to access information at any time using the company's integrated voice response system, thus further improving service levels and reducing costs. Delivering caller information to agents' screens as a call is connected would provide agents with important information about each caller as soon as they start a call, improving responsiveness and eliminating tedious repetition of information.

The company is also considering deploying Cisco Unified Communications in its career agencies to provide those agents with broader and deeper functionality, and simplifying maintenance and support. Increasing the use of Meet-Me audio conferencing and potentially introducing videoconferencing can accelerate problem resolution and improve access to specialists. Finally, it will now be possible for some call center agents to work from their homes, allowing Beneficial to create more flexible staffing patterns, and reducing expenses related to the call center's facility.

With innovative IP communications capabilities at every agent's desk, Beneficial Financial Group is finding Cisco Unified Communications very beneficial.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Cisco switching solutions, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/switching>.

To learn more about Cisco Unified Communications, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/voice>.

To learn more about the Beneficial Financial Group, visit: <http://www.beneficialfinancialgroup.com>.

This customer story is based on information provided by the Beneficial Financial Group and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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