

Cisco Partner Helps Growing Employment Firm Deploy Converged Network

CPI employs Cisco network to help Human Potential Consulting stay connected with remote contractors and improve productivity of staff

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CPI SOLUTIONS

- Camarillo, California
- 50 employees

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Design a high-performance network to support a young company with big growth plans
- Train employees to use a feature-rich IP-based phone system
- Plan a nondisruptive transition to a converged network during a headquarters move

NETWORK SOLUTION

- IP-based phone system to add capacity and functionality
- Firewall protection for Internet connectivity
- Integrated services router for call processing, security, and high-performance switching

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Following the principles of the Cisco® Smart Business Roadmap helps the customer see how technology can enhance its business over the long term
- Choosing a Cisco integrated services router provides adaptability and investment protection to support growth
- New IP phone system frees staff time for training, and a new LAN provides a foundation for online access to project and company information

Business Challenge

Human Potential Consulting (HPC), based in California, was founded in 1997 to provide a second chance for the jobless. Cofounder, president, and CEO Garnett Newcombe recognized the “human potential” in people facing extraordinary challenges in obtaining employment, including disabilities, age, lack of work experience, and criminal records.

Within a few short years, HPC grew from 2 employees to 12 permanent and 22 contract employees, and expanded its services into three areas: project management, staff placement, and staff and management development. Because HPC is an employment services company, contract awards dictate where most of its staff is based. As HPC won more contracts, its staff became more spread out across the state of California, with some contracts being handled out of another HPC office in Detroit. With continued growth in services, staff, and locations, staying connected became an increasing challenge.

In 2006, Newcombe was one of 20 women entrepreneurs recognized by Count Me In’s national “Make Mine a \$Million Business” program to foster women-owned businesses. Cisco is the network technology sponsor for the program, and as part of the award, HPC received a Cisco Smart Business Communications package designed and deployed by CPI Solutions. CPI, headquartered in Camarillo, California, is a Cisco Silver Partner and winner of the 2006 Cisco Customer Satisfaction Excellence Award.

“HPC was clearly poised for tremendous success, but the lack of a technology infrastructure was constraining their growth,” says CPI’s Tony Laiewski, vice president of sales. “They had a mission-critical online job application, but no security on their Internet connection. Their existing phone system was clearly inadequate, which affected both employee productivity and customer responsiveness. There were too few outbound and inbound lines, no way to tell when a line was in use, no one had a direct extension, and people were constantly running from desk to desk because there was no way to transfer calls. And, except for e-mail, there was no foundation for local- or wide-area connectivity.”

Network Solution

Following the principles of the Cisco Smart Business Roadmap, a guide to technology planning and implementation, Marty Sarkisian, senior account executive at CPI, and Ishmael Shabazz, senior network engineer at CPI, began working with HPC to devise a technology plan that would support HPC's business goals for growth, connectivity among headquarters staff and remote contractors, and improved responsiveness to customers.

CPI's voice-over-IP (VoIP) team is certified and recognized as one of the few Cisco IP Communications specialized partners in Southern California. The new HPC network designed by CPI is based on a Cisco 2800 Series Integrated Services Router and Cisco Unified IP Phones. Shabazz recommended the Cisco 2800 Series router "because HPC is growing so rapidly, they don't know exactly what capabilities they will need in the future. The Cisco integrated services router gives them a high-performance network today, and allows them to enable features like QoS [quality of service] and add business applications like video conferencing without facing a complete equipment upgrade."

The Cisco router incorporates Cisco Unified CallManager Express (now Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express), which handles call processing for the Cisco Unified IP Phones, as well as a high-performance Ethernet LAN switch. Shabazz also used the built-in Cisco IOS[®] Firewall on the router to secure HPC's Internet connection.

Newcombe just became HPC's first mobile worker, with her new laptop computer, but she knows she won't be the last. "In the future, I expect that more of our staff will be connecting securely from remote sites through our Cisco network." Sarkisian recognized that remote connectivity and mobility would be a business advantage for HPC, and knows that the VPN connectivity built into the router software will allow the company to give managers and even contractors the ability to securely access project or company information from remote sites.

Much of HPC's business involves large, multiyear contracts that can dictate an expansion in staff and office space virtually overnight. In the middle of planning for its new technology infrastructure, HPC won a major government contract and needed to move to new headquarters. "We had to plan and deploy the network in about 30 days without overwhelming them or disrupting the move," says Sarkisian.

CPI worked with HPC's IT consultant to plan the wiring for the new office space so that employees could just plug in and start using their new IP phones. "The Cisco IP phone system would give them so much more functionality than they were used to, so we spent quite a bit of time talking with headquarters staff to understand what they wanted in a phone system to help them be more productive and responsive to customers," says Sarkisian.

"We moved in with the old phones, but simply switched them out when the new phones arrived," says Deidre Norville, director of operations and management at HPC. "The way that CPI planned the cutover was excellent, and it all went like clockwork. Our staff never missed a beat with work, and they loved the new phones from the start."

Business Results

The new technology infrastructure has supported HPC's ability to capitalize on business opportunities in more ways than Newcombe ever imagined. The new phone system has not just added more phone lines, "it has dramatically improved the productivity of our employees," she states. "When I walk around the office, I can see that employees are spending more time working and less time trying to track down colleagues to tell them they have a call. We can now initiate ad

hoc conference calls with remote staff or customers from any phone. I've also noticed how seemingly small things can make a difference in how people feel about their jobs, like giving each person his or her own extension. I would estimate that staff productivity has increased by 65%."

As CEO, Newcombe now finds that she spends less time on administration and can be out in the community more. "I can be out of the office promoting the company, attracting job applicants, and winning new business. Taking the time to build a strong technology foundation is one of the best moves we've made as a small business."

PRODUCT LIST
<p>Routing and Switching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco 2800 Series Integrated Services Router with integrated Layer 3 Ethernet switch • VLANs
<p>Security and VPN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Router-based encryption, VPN support, Network Admission Control, intrusion prevention, Cisco IOS Firewall, and VPNs
<p>Voice and IP Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Unified CallManager Express • Cisco Unity® Express • Cisco Unified IP Phone 7960G

According to Norville, "Technology wasn't really part of our plans in the past, but we knew it was vital to our future success."

For the first time, HPC has the ability to network all the desktops on the headquarters LAN to give employees access to company information. The company plans to capitalize on this capability to support an important new contract from the Social Security Administration (SSA). The new LAN will enable HPC to give the four-person SSA project team highly secure, shared access to all project information on a common server.

NEXT STEPS

The Cisco network has helped HPC accelerate its business immediately, with tremendous flexibility and capacity for sustained growth. With one network, the company can support voice, data, video, wireless, security, and beyond. "It's very exciting to know that we can continue to add employees and customers for years to come without outgrowing our phone system, and that we can add video conferencing so easily to help us stay connected to remote staff," says Newcombe.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about Cisco's Smart Business Communications and Smart Business Roadmap, go to www.cisco.com/go/smb and www.cisco.com/go/sbr.

For more information on Count Me In, go to www.countmein.org



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