

Intelligent switching helps Keykert USA
get more out of its IT investments



Customer Profile

Keykert USA is a leading manufacturer of premium automotive locks and latching systems, supplying parts to Jaguar, GM, Chrysler, and other major automakers.

Keykert is a subsidiary of the Germany-based Kiekert Group, which also operates manufacturing facilities in the United Kingdom, Mexico, and the Czech Republic. The company holds more than 300 patents, and has issued licenses for its technology in virtually every automobile-producing country.

Project Background

Keykert has intense networking demands, including frame relay links to its corporate headquarters in Germany and a Mexican subsidiary. Its daily operations revolve around an R&D facility in Wixom, Michigan, and a manufacturing plant about 45 miles away in Webberville.

The LAN in Wixom includes about 150 PCs and 30 CAD stations. The Webberville, Michigan, plant has about 200 PCs in offices and on the production line, and relies on Wixom's high-speed Internet connection for Web access.

The Challenge

Keykert approached its networking partner, SKJ Technologies, with two main problems. First, its network was experiencing significant performance issues, particularly in Wixom. Plagued by frequent network slowdowns, Keykert's IT staff suspected the problems were related to the massive CAD files being generated by the R&D team, but couldn't be sure.

Which brings us to the second part of the problem: the lack of a sophisticated network management system. Unable to pinpoint the source of bottlenecks, Keykert's IT staff had only hunches to go on.

"I've got a network engineer and a couple of CAD support people," said Keykert's IT manager, Kevin Warner. "When they come to me and say there's a performance issue of some kind, I'd like to identify what the problem is. But I didn't have a lot of information to go on, so the CAD support group tended to just point the finger at the network, instead of looking at the workstations or the client or the server and determine what's going on there."

Warner believed a network upgrade was in order, but knew he'd have to show a significant return on investment (ROI) to win approval.

"When I talk to my boss about purchasing something, we need to be able to see either a productivity gain or that it will save us money. ROI is definitely a must-have for us at this point."

**—Kevin Warner,
IT Manager, Keykert USA**

The Solution

To meet Keykert's need for a highly available, more easily managed network that would support both current and future requirements, SKJ deployed Cisco Catalyst® Intelligent Ethernet switches at both the Wixom and Webberville sites.

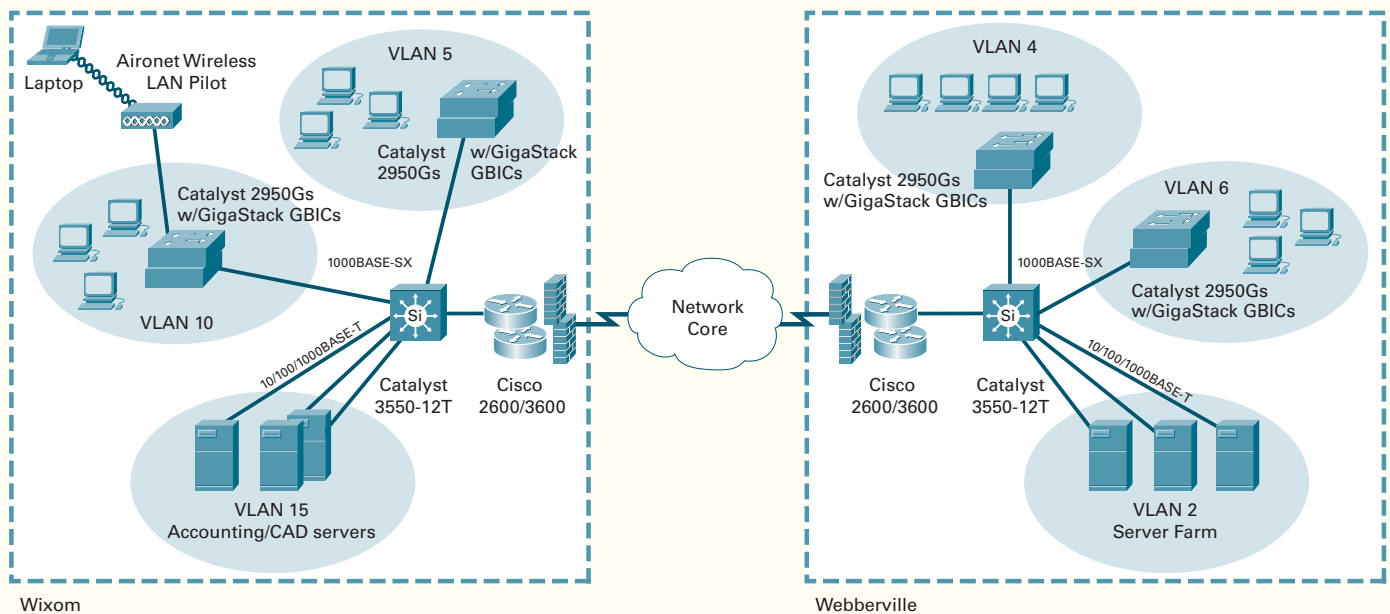
This solution offered an immediate boost in performance, delivering GBIC-based Gigabit Ethernet across Keykert's mix of copper and fiber cabling. But the advantages extended beyond raw bandwidth and flexible connectivity. A unique combination of intelligent features and capabilities ensured Keykert could make the most of their IT resources, while also providing a solid foundation for future applications.

At both locations, Cisco Catalyst 3550 Series Intelligent Ethernet switches replaced various brands of 10BASE-T hubs at the network core, enabling inter-VLAN routing between VLANs configured for specific users and applications. This allowed Keykert to separate the CAD and PC networking environments, so traffic from one would never again impact the other. Traffic was further segregated along workgroup lines, with sales, marketing, and accounting divisions each utilizing a different VLAN.

Additionally, Cisco Catalyst 2950 Series Intelligent Ethernet switches were deployed at the network edge at both sites, providing true end-to-end quality of service (QoS) to prioritize traffic, alleviate bottlenecks, and control the rate at which individual hosts and streams transmit.

Another piece of the solution was a CiscoWorks management system, which supports remote monitoring, configuration, fault-detection, and troubleshooting through an easy-to-use interface. And with the 10BASE-T hubs out of the picture, Keykert no longer had to deal with managing a multi-vendor environment, allowing them to take advantage of a unified, Cisco IOS® Software-based network to reduce training, management, and troubleshooting costs.

Keykert Network with Cisco Catalyst 3550 and 2950 Series Intelligent Ethernet Switches



As a result, Keykert's IT staff gained more granular control over network resources, while simultaneously streamlining administrative tasks. This not only made it possible to govern the numerous availability, QoS, and security features supported by Cisco Catalyst Intelligent Ethernet switches, but also made it easy to deploy new applications and uniformly configure the network.

During the course of the project, SKJ suggested Keykert could also benefit from the added mobility of a Cisco Aironet® wireless LAN solution. Keykert's team agreed to a trial run, giving them a chance to evaluate security features before deploying on a wider scale.

The Result

Through the combination of Cisco Catalyst Intelligent Ethernet switches and CiscoWorks management tools, Keykert was able to eliminate the network slowdowns that had hindered employee productivity, while simultaneously adding new levels of security and manageability to the network.

"CiscoWorks tools are capable of giving us the information we need about the network, including Cisco routers we had previously deployed," Warner said. "We don't have to deal with mysterious slowdowns and unhappy users anymore. Now that those are gone, our lives have gotten a lot easier."

Deploying Cisco Catalyst intelligent switches also laid the groundwork for Keykert's future plans, such as deploying multicast video services.

"We needed to have a solid foundation to build our business on," Warner said. "That's what this has given us."

Cisco Advantages

Warner and his partners at SKJ credited Cisco with being much more than a supplier of technology. Cisco supported their efforts throughout the project, not only participating in the initial network consultations, but also lending an expert hand when an interface configuration glitch produced severe broadcast storms.

"It definitely takes a team effort when you run into those kinds of issues," said Jason Kolevar, SKJ's director of technology. "When you rip out a core infrastructure and plug it all in, it doesn't always happen perfectly, and it's important to get that kind of support when you need it."

Warner said the project also illustrated how Cisco's end-to-end approach to networking solutions can help companies identify additional ways to cut costs and boost productivity. In Keykert's case, the addition of Cisco Aironet access points allowed the company to cost-effectively explore the benefits of wireless LAN access before extending it to other parts of the Wixom and Webberville sites.

"The fact we were able to get everything we needed from Cisco and SKJ made things that much easier for us," Warner said.

For more information
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