

## Zijlstra Small Furniture strengthens market leadership by implementing Cisco IP telephony solution

### Executive Summary

#### CUSTOMER NAME

- Zijlstra Small Furniture

#### INDUSTRY

- Transport and Logistics

#### BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Overcoming the major drawbacks inherent in using mobile phones for in-house wireless communication presented several challenges, including reducing high call costs and resolving interoperability problems between the different telephone systems
- Linking the phone traffic to the telephone management system
- Connecting the mobile computers installed on the forklift trucks in the warehouse to the wireless environment

#### SOLUTION

- A Cisco converged wireless solution provides all employees and mobile computers with LAN connectivity and IP telephony

#### BUSINESS RESULTS

- The network has enhanced Zijlstra's responsiveness, flexibility and customer satisfaction levels – factors that are absolutely key to success in a fiercely contested market

**Zijlstra Small Furniture is an international furniture distributor trading out of Tiel in the Netherlands. With its workforce using mobile phones for internal communications and portable computers in the warehouse, Zijlstra wanted them all connected to its local area network. The solution has delivered advanced communications and the ability to better integrate processes to the company's back-office system using a Cisco wireless network combined with Cisco IP telephony.**

#### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Operating from Tiel in Holland, small furniture specialist Zijlstra BV – trading as Zijlstra Small Furniture – is market leader in the Netherlands and Belgium, with over 60 per cent of its revenue derived from export through an international network of representatives.

Among the first in its industry with an extensive IT environment, Zijlstra led the way in 2000 by implementing Microsoft's ERP system Axapta®.

Director Marcel Zijlstra says: "To improve efficiency and information access, we provided our employees – many of whom spend much of their time on the road – with mobile phones. This led to a situation in which employees communicated almost exclusively by mobile – a costly solution."

Early in 2004, Zijlstra planned to automate its warehouse, including installing a wireless computer network enabling connection to portable computers on the forklift trucks. This would mean a new information and communication technology



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(ICT) infrastructure was required for the shipping department and the office environment too, so the solution had to include mobile telephones as part of a wireless communications system. Also, business operations efficiency was to be improved by implementing better communications between front-end and back-office applications.

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**Marcel Zijlstra, Director, Zijlstra BV**

## **SOLUTION**

Zijlstra realised that a wireless computing network would provide substantial benefits in terms of organisational efficiency and improved information access. By selecting wireless IP telephony, Zijlstra was spared the cost of investing in separate wireless networks for data and voice communications. In addition, the solution provided the important ability to link with Axapta.

In seeking the best solution, Zijlstra soon concluded that Cisco Systems offered the most attractive option. Marcel Zijlstra observes: “The company would reap substantial additional benefits if the wireless data network could also improve the availability of our workers. Cisco offers the right answer to this issue as they not only provide a networking solution, but also a telephony solution to go with it.”

Cisco was selected as the only vendor that Zijlstra believed could deliver what it promised: “We considered various suppliers, but none of them could convince us that they had sufficient expertise and experience with this sophisticated technology. If Cisco was offering a solution, it just had to be best in class,” Marcel Zijlstra comments. Zijlstra was also reassured by the fact that Cisco’s partner had been among the first in the Netherlands to deploy IP telephony in its own organisation, and this strengthened the feeling they had come to the right vendor as well as the right implementation partner.

Cisco referred Zijlstra to ACA IT-Solutions of Eindhoven. This ICT service provider is an expert in turnkey computing solutions and a Cisco Premier Certified Partner in Cisco’s IP Communications Express. With an extensive portfolio of IP communications products and services ACA supports organisations throughout the ICT lifecycle, from planning and design to development and implementation, management, maintenance and application and systems support.

Jan Rooijackers, manager of the Zijlstra account for ACA, explains that the company vision is: “To enter into a dialogue with the customer to provide comprehensive solutions allowing optimum response to issues in the organisation’s computing environment. Zijlstra expressed a marked preference for telephony, with Cisco being the only vendor capable of integrating wireless networking with fixed environments as well as mobile telephony.”

Since ACA IT-Solutions operates an IP telephony network in its own office, Zijlstra was able to visit and see the technology work in practice. “ACA’s demonstration gave us the final push,” says Marcel Zijlstra. “The knowledge they have acquired in this area is indispensable with emerging technologies like this. It also convinced me that we could rest assured that they would manage the implementation appropriately.”

Prior to contacting ACA IT-Solutions, Zijlstra had already started installing the cabling in the warehouse. Installation activities could not be suspended, so ACA immediately took over the cable management and optimised everything for the new ICT infrastructure. That way, they ensured a seamless continuation of the installation work and completed the remainder of the implementation. ACA also determined the best and fastest possible migration path to the new situation.

ACA IT-Solutions and Zijlstra opted to migrate from the old to the new infrastructure in a single operation. “We were in the middle of a modification process which greatly added to our preference for a wireless network,” Marcel Zijlstra explains. “After all, as a result of the renovation work, more employees than normal did not have a fixed workplace.” In addition, connecting the forklift truck terminals was a new issue, and so was the fact that a new wing was added as part of the building project. Both events required extending the system immediately.

The ‘Big Bang’ implementation was greatly helped by the fact that the end-users quickly adopted the new system and the move to IP telephony went extremely smoothly. The solution’s new features such as call-forwarding and the telephone directory have proven very easy for users. Marcel Zijlstra confirms that no extensive end-user training was required: “It is a very user-friendly, self-explanatory system which people quickly learn to use in daily practice.”

**“IT HAS GREATLY IMPROVED OUR SERVICE LEVELS, OUR AVAILABILITY AND OUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS. THE KEY BENEFIT, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE NEW SOLUTION ALLOWS US TO DEVELOP MORE INTIMATE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS. THIS GIVES US A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN OUR MARKET SEGMENT”**

**Marcel Zijlstra, Director, Zijlstra BV**

## **BUSINESS RESULTS**

ACA IT-Solutions first installed the new computer network at Zijlstra and then implemented a wireless layer on top. By converging voice and data traffic, it was possible to bring the entire ICT network environment under a single management contract, which is a significant advantage for small and medium sized enterprises such as Zijlstra.

The trading company is thus saved the costs of two separate suppliers of voice and data networking, while additional savings are achieved by a reduction in the total number of telephones required. A number of employees can do without a desk phone and only use a wireless device because they are on the move somewhere on the premises most of the day. Marcel Zijlstra explains: “The cost-saving effect may seem marginal, but unlike the old situation, these people are now fully available and that’s a big value generator.”

The flexibility of the wireless network and the ability to integrate the Axapta ERP system is proving very powerful. Belgian ICT service provider Edan took just hours to code the required interface. It proved to be a wise choice, and Marcel Zijlstra is very pleased with the result. “The link with the back-office system saves us an enormous amount of time and energy.” Business contacts can be called by simply clicking an icon on the CRM application screen, effectively eliminating the need to consult an external telephone directory.

Axapta also offers extensive call registration features, which have been integrated into the Cisco IP phones thanks to their ability to act as XML (Extensible Markup Language)-based data terminals. Users can insert a brief call description in a pop-up window, allowing calls to be tracked based on time, duration, caller, call receiver and subject. This helps to avoid lengthy discussions, and as the telephone system has been integrated into the network, when a customer calls the information appears automatically on the screen. Users no longer have to search for the information or ask the customer to refer to previous calls. When forwarding a call, the application tracks the call, and all data can be entered into the customer, financial or sales databases during the conversation.

Marcel Zijlstra summarises the benefits resulting from implementing Cisco's IP telephony network: "It has greatly improved our service levels, our availability and our internal communications. The key benefit, however, is that the new solution allows us to develop more intimate customer relationships. This gives us a competitive edge in our market segment."



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