



Cisco IP Telephony Solution Provides Communications Lifeline For Bloodsource Blood Bank

"We went with Cisco because of its outstanding reputation. The Cisco technical and sales teams were beyond compare. The partnership between Cisco and Quest Technology Consulting was important, too. When you're in the middle of a huge decision-making process, it means a lot to have an organization you can count on."

*~ Stephanie Stevens,
Director, Center Recruitment,
Bloodsource*

Bloodsource, a California-based blood bank with a national clientele, deployed Cisco® CallManager Express® to upgrade its outdated voice communications system and communicate more effectively with staff, blood donors, and hospitals. The new system simplifies administration and significantly reduces toll call and maintenance costs.

Background

Bloodsource, a community-based, not-for-profit blood bank with headquarters in Sacramento, California, collects, tests, and distributes blood and blood products for hospitals and blood centers. The organization is the sole source of blood for 40 hospitals in 17 northern California counties, and supplies resources as needed to hospitals in New York and Virginia as well.

Every day, Bloodsource employees must contact hundreds of blood donors, schedule statewide appointments, and communicate with hospitals and other Bloodsource staff at offices in Redding, Chico, Merced, and 12 satellite facilities throughout northern California. Their success in supplying blood products to the hospitals and patients who need them depends on continuous access to high-quality, cost-effective telephone services.

Challenge

With thousands of patients depending on the safe, timely delivery of Bloodsource's blood products, maintaining effective communications across the organization was critical. However, Bloodsource's existing telephony equipment fell far short of meeting its communications requirements.

The organization's patchwork of aging public branch exchange (PBX) and telephone equipment from a variety of vendors provided few functions beyond the most basic voice service. There was no unified voice-mail system between offices, and some locations had to rely on antiquated answering machines to record incoming calls. There was no systematic way to identify missed calls, and simple functions, such as call forwarding and message management, were difficult or impossible.

The inability to communicate effectively was a serious matter for Bloodsource, especially when a missed call might concern an unexpected demand for blood at a particular client hospital or an upcoming inspection by Food and Drug Administration (FDA) auditors.



“We had no way of centrally communicating with everyone,” recalled Stephanie Stevens, Director, Center Recruitment.

In addition to hampering internal communications, the antiquated system also made it difficult to effectively recruit potential donors. At Bloodsource’s 40-person call center in Sacramento, where most calls to blood donors originate, operators must make 400 donor appointments each day. It takes an average of five calls to cement a single appointment, and it’s not unusual for Bloodsource to make more than 55,000 calls each month. However, despite the scale of this task, there was no way to track call volume, average length of calls, or any other statistics about phone use.

“We receive many inbound calls,” says Stevens, “but I couldn’t tell you how many.”

Compounding the problem, Bloodsource’s statewide phone system was growing increasingly costly to use and maintain. The organization was spending between US \$4,000 and \$5,000 each month on toll charges, much of which went toward internal calls from outlying offices. Maintenance was an even bigger problem. Because many of the organization’s PBX switches were no longer produced or supported by their original manufacturers, the organization had to rely on a private contractor to perform all moves, adds, and changes across the organization. The service was both costly and time consuming—even simple maintenance procedures could take days or weeks to complete. As a nonprofit company that had to watch every penny, Bloodsource needed to find a way to reduce these costs and communicate more efficiently.

With so many lives depending on them, Bloodsource needed a more flexible, cost-effective telephony system that would eliminate messaging problems, enable staff to effectively communicate with donors, hospitals, and other offices, and simplify administration.

Bloodsource’s leadership team recognized that moving to an IP telephony platform could help them unify and enhance phone communications across the organization, and dramatically reduce toll and maintenance costs. However, the organization needed to ensure that any IP telephony solution was reliable and cost-effective enough to support their critical operations. Bloodsource was not ready to adopt an organization wide IP telephony all at once, but rather wanted to begin with one test site, and later expand the system if it proved successful. Any potential solution needed to be flexible and scalable enough to easily accommodate upgrades down the road.

Solution

Bloodsource decided to move to an IP telephony platform, and they asked Quest Technology Consulting to help them select and implement the right solution. After considering multiple vendors, Bloodsource selected the Cisco CallManager Express solution.

“We went with Cisco because of its outstanding reputation,” says Stevens. “The Cisco technical and sales teams were beyond compare. June Bivins and Hitesh Saijpal were particularly outstanding and provided a constant level of involvement. The partnership between Cisco and Quest Technology Consulting was important, too. It means a lot to have an organization you can count on.”

The Cisco CallManager Express solution enables small businesses and branch offices to deliver data, voice, and telephony management services over a single, router-based platform. It provides a rich telephony feature set and uses the wide array of voice capabilities that are available in Cisco IOS® Software. The solution also makes it possible to download phone software images and remotely configure and manage the Cisco IP phones.

Bloodsource Snapshot

Bloodsource is a blood bank serving locations throughout California, and is one of the few blood banks in the world that has sufficient donations to share resources with hospitals and blood centers in other areas. Founded in 1948, Bloodsource maintains headquarters in Sacramento, California, and 12 satellite offices in the Sacramento area, as well as large branch offices in Chico, Merced, and Redding, California.

The Cisco CallManager Express solution is ideal for smaller implementations where a full-featured enterprise IP communications system is not required. The solution can also be easily upgraded to a full-featured Cisco CallManager solution, making it the perfect choice for Bloodsource to pilot IP telephony in a limited implementation.

Bloodsource chose its Merced office as the trial site for the new phone system because the office was moving to a new location, and Stevens didn't want to move the existing PBX to the new site. "We were going to go with IP telephony system wide eventually," says Stevens, "and we wanted to use Merced as a test case. We felt that success there would help staff in other locations be more comfortable with the new technology."

Quest Technology Consulting deployed a Cisco 3745 Multiservice Access Router with the Cisco CallManager Express solution at the Merced Bloodsource office to support the entire office phone system. The router connects with Cisco Catalyst® 3524 switches, which segment voice and data communications throughout the office's Ethernet LAN, and deliver high-quality voice service to 35 Cisco 7940, 7910, and 7960 IP phones. The Merced network also connects with Bloodsource's Sacramento headquarters network, extending intranet and e-mail access to Merced employees.

Results

The Cisco IP Telephony solution, rolled out in early 2003, has significantly enhanced the telephone services available to Bloodsource while helping reduce communications costs. Everyone at the Merced office now has voice mail, as well as a host of other telephony features, greatly simplifying communications and enhancing productivity. With the staff in Merced now working in two separate buildings, voice mail is more essential than ever before.

The staff adapted very quickly to the new phones, according to Stevens. "Users are in love with the directory lookup and speed-dial features," she says. "With so many different numbers to call, these features are a real time saver. Users can easily check on missed calls, and they can call the last number dialed with a single button."

The system has also proven robust and highly dependable. "We have had no problems with reliability or uptime," says Stevens.

The Cisco CallManager Express solution immediately helped reduce maintenance costs as well. Moves and changes on the system are much easier, and can be accomplished quickly by a staff member—eliminating the costs and delays of working with outside consultants.

The superior performance and reliability of the Cisco CallManager Express solution, its productivity-enhancing features, and the savings in maintenance and support costs that the solution has provided have already justified Bloodsource's investment—even before expanding to an organization wide IP telephony system. And, based on Bloodsource's internal ROI calculations, once the statewide network is in place the organization will save between US \$3,000 and \$5,000 each month by eliminating long distance toll calls to donors and remote offices. The solution is proving to be a communications lifeline for Bloodsource, and a powerful asset in enabling this organization to provide the blood products on which thousands of people depend.

"Cisco and Quest just did an excellent job designing our system, really getting to know our network and our needs, and making sure we had the right solution without cutting corners," says Stevens. "We just feel very confident working with Cisco and Quest, and it's been like that from day one."

Next Steps

Thanks to the success of the Merced deployment, Bloodsource leadership and staff is now convinced that the Cisco IP Telephony solution will provide substantial benefits at its offices across the state, and especially in the Sacramento call center. Stevens plans to roll out a full-featured CallManager IP telephony solution at the Sacramento headquarters in the coming year, which will eventually be extended to connect all offices across the state. The flexibility of the Cisco CallManager Express solution will allow Bloodsource to easily convert the Merced system to a Survivable Remote Site Telephony (SRST)-enabled voice gateway in a centralized CallManager architecture with no additional investment.

Once deployed, the new system will enable statewide usage tracking and toll bypass, and give Bloodsource's call center employees a wide range of options for monitoring, managing, and enhancing organizational communications.

The wide range of leasing and financing options that Cisco provides will allow even a nonprofit like Bloodsource to realize the full benefits of IP communications. "The leasing options from Cisco are phenomenal," says Stevens. "It would be ridiculous not to take advantage of them."

Contact

Stephanie Stevens

Director Center Recruitment

stephanie.stevens@bloodsource.org



Corporate Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 526-4100

European Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: 31 0 20 357 1000
Fax: 31 0 20 357 1100

Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-7660
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Capital Tower
168 Robinson Road
#22-01 to #29-01
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

Cisco Systems has more than 200 offices in the following countries and regions. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the

Cisco Web site at www.cisco.com/go/offices

Argentina • Australia • Austria • Belgium • Brazil • Bulgaria • Canada • Chile • China PRC • Colombia • Costa Rica • Croatia
Czech Republic • Denmark • Dubai, UAE • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Hong Kong SAR • Hungary • India • Indonesia • Ireland
Israel • Italy • Japan • Korea • Luxembourg • Malaysia • Mexico • The Netherlands • New Zealand • Norway • Peru • Philippines • Poland
Portugal • Puerto Rico • Romania • Russia • Saudi Arabia • Scotland • Singapore • Slovakia • Slovenia • South Africa • Spain • Sweden
Switzerland • Taiwan • Thailand • Turkey • Ukraine • United Kingdom • United States • Venezuela • Vietnam • Zimbabwe

Copyright © 2003 Cisco Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. Cisco, Cisco Systems, the Cisco Systems logo, Catalyst, and Cisco IOS are registered trademarks or trademarks of Cisco Systems, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the U.S. and certain other countries.

All other trademarks mentioned in this document or Web site are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (0304R)

Printed in the USA