

CISCO ENABLES EQUANT TO DELIVER CONVERGED VOICE, VIDEO, AND DATA

BACKGROUND

Equant, a member of the France Telecom Group, is a recognized industry leader providing global data and IP network and integration services for multinational businesses around the world. Building on more than 50 years of experience in data communications, Equant serves thousands of the world's top companies with the industry's most extensive portfolio of managed network services, including the market-leading IP VPN used by more than 1,000 global businesses.

Equant markets its services to Global 2000 companies by differentiating and expanding its services, while also extending its relationship with existing customers to provide the infrastructure to support combined voice, video, contact center, and data services.

Since its inception, Equant has continued to expand its data experience and services to include voice, video, and multimedia applications. To that end, Equant has launched a data IP virtual private networking (VPN) service using technology from Cisco Systems[®], implemented a converged IP service designed to integrate voice and data over Equant's shared WAN, and recently announced a managed voice and data converged service for the LAN environment.

CHALLENGE

In August 1999, Equant's infrastructure consisted of multiple networks supporting different services. The service provider decided that it needed to ultimately combine them into a single flexible, scalable, and more manageable platform that could support all of the existing services—as well as future services.

SOLUTION

Based on its history with Cisco[®], Equant chose to migrate to Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) technology. Equant Voice for IP VPN service—a fully managed solution that supports global voice and fax calling over IP—launched in February 2000 and was the first converged IP service offering built on top of the MPLS architecture and based on the Cisco Service Provider Business Voice Solution. The Voice for IP VPN service supports customers with a mixed environment of IP-based private branch exchange (PBX) systems like Cisco CallManager as well as traditional TDM-based PBXs. Through joint collaboration with Cisco, the service has developed to offer enhanced services and functionality equal to traditional voice VPNs, such as private dial plans, Forced On-net, Virtual On-net, or PBX transparency. Equant's existing IP infrastructure and experience made the voice overlay process very straightforward and simple to manage.

In April 2002, Equant announced the IP Telephony service, also based on the Cisco Service Provider Business Voice Solution architecture, which extends convergence from the WAN to the LAN, and even the desktop with Cisco IP Telephony solutions.

Equant chose to deploy the Cisco Service Provider Business Voice Solution for several reasons. Cisco and Equant teams worked together to jointly develop a solution based on Cisco AVVID (Architecture for Voice, Video and Integrated Data) components and multiservice CPE routers. Equant also cites as key differentiators Cisco's market leadership in IP telephony as well as its robust Cisco CallManager solution. "Over the years, Equant has worked collaboratively with Cisco to deliver integrated voice and data services," says Michael Burrell, head of enterprise telephony for Equant's Voice & Video Solutions group. "Through our collaboration, Cisco and Equant have developed a strong partnership. Cisco's product support and account teams have always delivered exceptional service and Cisco has always been able to provide the leadership and robust technology required to ensure Equant's success in offering value-added managed services to our customers."

Equant also chose the Cisco IP Telephony solution because of prior collaboration on its intelligent voice over IP (VoIP) VPN network architecture, which delivers least-cost routing and the ability to reroute calls around network congestion. If the voice channel is occupied, the call is routed to the PSTN at the most appropriate point using least-cost routing techniques. This process ensures that the call goes through and maintains high call quality.

THE EQUANT SERVICE OFFER

Equant offers its IP Telephony and Voice for IP VPN services in 91 countries around the globe. IP telephony joins Equant's voice service portfolio as a fully integrated option of the Voice for IP VPN service. "Equant's end-to-end IP telephony service provides full interoperability and easy configuration with real-time class of service to our customers," says Burrell. "Essentially, if one of our customers purchases Cisco CallManager, they can easily deploy Equant's voice for IP VPN as an IP 'plug-and-play' service by directing IP telephony traffic into the Ethernet port of a Cisco multiservice router. The Cisco Service Provider Business Voice Solution architecture enables Equant to guarantee traffic is carried with real-time class of service with superior voice quality."

Equant's IP Telephony solution brings convergence to the LAN and the desktop. With this convergence solution, Equant provides customers with value-added IP telephony applications such as unified messaging, extension mobility, and corporate directory services. In addition, Voice for IP VPN offers abbreviated, private dialing plans on a global basis (accomplished through number translation), least-cost routing, and call overflow on access or termination if the network is busy. Another feature, Virtual On-Net, treats a non-IP VPN site as though it were on net by translating a private site number into a public number. When an end user dials a PSTN number to another corporate location on the network, Forced On-net automatically routes the call On-net, maximizing savings by directing traffic over the customer's IP VPN and avoiding international toll charges. Customers only pay for the bandwidth required to carry voice calls. There are no usage-sensitive charges for calls that stay on the corporate IP VPN. This is especially important for customers seeking to lower their international toll charges. Calls placed off the corporate network, or off-net calls, can be completed to any valid phone number, including mobile phones. In addition, Equant offers inbound call collection for contact centers in 40 countries and Video for IP VPN in 90 countries.

RESULTS

Equant's IP telephony solutions offer customers lower TCO, without adding staff. Equant can simplify a customer's telephony by managing the complexity. Equant gives customers visibility and control over their telecom spending, while facilitating migration to IP telephony at the right pace based on positive ROI.

IP telephony provides Equant's customers with increased productivity and mobility by allowing users to manage their communications anytime, from anywhere. In addition, convergence reduces capital costs for customer premises equipment and reduces access circuit costs and network expenses because multiple sites can be administered as a single system. Customers also see a cost savings in terms of the overall solution: reduction in operations costs, access line costs, operations, administration, and management costs.

Equant also provides its customers with a smooth migration path. As customers transition to IP telephony, Equant supports them with a variety of IP telephony professional services, including business and technology requirements assessment, design, and implementation services around the world. Once service is established, Equant offers a flexible range of support from maintenance, to fully managed LAN IP telephony services. Equant supports traditional PBX and voice services offering complete interoperability, allowing customers to protect their PBX investments while migrating new sites to IP telephony at their own pace. "Equant's professional and integration services complement our network services," says Burrell. "We provide expertise around the globe, assisting customers with pilots and trials of IP telephony and IP VPN services, design support, implementation, and cutover. No other service provider has the global reach, breadth of products and services, and depth to support its customers. For example, Equant has local support for 30 native languages during business hours and around-the-clock support in 14 languages during non-business hours."

Since implementing convergence technology solutions, Equant has been able to attract and retain more customers and has witnessed strong demand for its IP telephony service. In the long term, Equant sees the market as much more aware and accepting of convergence services. And as business practices change, Equant also sees demand for video over IP.

European Space Agency

The European Space Agency (ESA) provides a vision of Europe's future in space, developing the strategies to fulfill this vision through collaborative projects in space science and technology. ESA had been receiving voice and data services from two different providers under two separate contracts. Initially, they deployed the IP VPN service from Equant. A year later they began overlaying voice services and Equant now provides converged voice and data services to a number of ESA sites.

ESA operates in 30 countries and will deliver all of its voice and video traffic over Equant's IP network. The service will include PBX interconnections for high-quality voice and fax and on-net calling as well as videoconferencing capabilities between ESA's five main European sites in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. "The network is helping to increase our administrative efficiency. In addition, the high-speed Internet capabilities are important to our outreach program by providing the public easy access to a vast array of information about our mission," says Michael Tabbert, head of ESA's IT Infrastructure division.

ESA chose Equant's VoIP VPN service because it provides significant cost advantages while integrating voice, video, and data over a single high-speed data network. As a result of recent security measures, ESA is increasingly making use of videoconferencing capabilities. In addition, videoconferencing enables ESA to communicate more effectively and reduce travel expenses.

"By integrating our voice, video, IP, and data networks through Equant IP VPN, we have a more efficient infrastructure for bringing ESA closer to the space industry and all other users of our programs," says Stefano Zatti of the ESA IT System section.

APL

With 76 ships traveling around the globe and around the clock, APL is one of the world's largest container transportation companies. APL's sister company, APL Logistics, provides supply-chain management services to retailers, manufacturers, and other clients. Both companies are becoming known for their use of technology. But when it came to transporting internal data on a system of networks around the world, APL found that it needed some help.

In November 2001, APL chose Equant's IP VPN data services to interconnect 180 APL locations in 32 countries with the company's Americas headquarters in Oakland, California, where APL's main IT group is located.

One result of the partnership between APL and Equant is an IP telephony project in Europe, begun in 2002, that enabled APL to replace traditional PBXs at five sites with a single, centrally located IP PBX. This reduces network administration and equipment costs, while ensuring that all users, even at small sites, have the same features and functionality.

The London hub location serves APL sites in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The IP telephony installation represents a complete, end-to-end IP telephony service with Equant providing both LAN IP telephony service plus IP telephony WAN service through Voice for IP VPN.

"Our competitors have large frame infrastructures and we don't think they're very forward-looking in the network services area," said Cindy Stoddard, APL's chief information officer. "What attracted us initially to Equant was the far reach of its services and also the quality of project management and the Equant people. Equant was one of the few providers that was able to offer that level of service in hard-to-reach areas of the world."

JT International

JT International (JTI) is the international subsidiary of Japan Tobacco, Inc., the third largest manufacturer of tobacco products. JTI has been an Equant customer since 1995, previously using Equant Frame Relay services for its international backbone. In May 2003, JTI contracted with Equant to provide an IP VPN solution to interconnect JTI's 11,000 employees at its headquarters, offices, and plants in more than 40 countries throughout Europe, Asia-Pacific, and the Americas.

"We wanted to integrate voice, IP, and data on the same high-speed network for cost-saving efficiencies in terms of IT staff and for the easy rollout of new productivity-enhancing applications such as SAP," says Bill Freyer, vice president of Information Technology at JTI. According to Freyer, "Equant's unmatched global presence assured us that they'd be able to manage the project anywhere in the world. We are already seeing a return on investment and have found out how much more efficient our business can be. Equant has supplied excellent support to us over the years and is viewed as one of our most trusted advisors."

Equant IP telephony was initially deployed in JTI's new Manchester, United Kingdom business service center. "Manchester was a 'greenfield' situation, so we had to choose either a traditional PBX or IP-based system. We found it much easier in terms of maintenance to use IP phones," says Gunter Hagendorf, director of global telecommunications and networks at JTI. "Employees just take the phone with them like the PC when they move offices, and there is no requirement to have a person on site to reconfigure the PBX."

This IP telephony deployment led to a project to convert three regional call centers into a virtual, global contact center through Equant IP Contact Center. Call centers in Montreal, Canada, St. Petersburg, Russia and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia operated independently. Migration of these geographically diverse centers into a global IP Contact Center allowed JT International to achieve load balancing between centers, lowering personnel cost and avoiding over-staffing. Now calls are routed based on the next available agent or skill set, such as language, regardless of the center location. The centers all leverage IP telephony for the agents.

ABOUT EQUANT

Equant (NYSE: ENT) (Euronext Paris: EQU) is a recognized industry leader in global communications services for multinational businesses. Equant combines its network expertise—including unmatched seamless network reach in 220 countries and territories

and local support in approximately 165 countries—with its expanded services capabilities to provide global, integrated and customized communication services to enable its customers key business processes. Equant serves thousands of the world's top companies, with the industry's most extensive portfolio of communications services and network solutions, including the market-leading IP VPN used by 1,000 global businesses as of Jan. 19, 2004. Equant, a subsidiary of France Telecom, was named Best Global Carrier 2003 and Best Managed Service 2003 at the World Communication Awards and consistently leads industry surveys in corporate user satisfaction. Equant receives Frost & Sullivan's 2002 Market Engineering Company of the Year Award for its industry-leading Voice for IP VPN service. In April 2002, Equant received Frost and Sullivan 2002 Market Engineering Product Innovation Award for "its comprehensive portfolio of IP telephony services".



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