

GOOD DIAGNOSIS

SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO MAKES SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL SAVINGS WITH CISCO IP TELEPHONY



FOUNDED IN 1973, SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP 20 PHARMACEUTICAL GROUPS. IT EMPLOYS 30,514 STAFF WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING A SALES FORCE OF 10,336 AND 6,273 RESEARCH SCIENTISTS AND SUPPORT STAFF LOCATED IN 14 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRES AROUND THE WORLD.

In Australia, there more than 300 staff located in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. The principal area of business for Sanofi-Synthélabo is ethical pharmaceuticals. Their core therapeutic areas include cardiovascular disease and thrombosis; diseases of the central nervous system; cancer and internal medicine.

Sanofi-Synthélabo has annual sales in excess of US \$5.6 billion and a research and development expenditure of US\$2 billion. Sanofi-Synthélabo's highly regarded Research and Development program has 49 compounds under development.

Products from this program generate more than \$2 billion in annual sales in the US alone.

THE CHALLENGE

WHEN PLANNING THEIR RELOCATION TO NEW PREMISES IN NORTH RYDE AT THE BEGINNING OF 2002, THE EXECUTIVE TEAM OF THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICE OF SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO DECIDED TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THEIR IT INFRASTRUCTURE.

Over the previous three years, their staffing levels had more than quadrupled from 36 to over 170 people. This rapid rate of growth required restructuring the existing business processes to cope with the new demand, as well as the introduction of a customer contact centre.

Joseph Helo, IT Manager at Sanofi-Synthélabo explains: "Meeting and exceeding customer needs is paramount to Sanofi-Synthélabo's success in Australia. We realised that we could significantly improve our levels of customer service if we implemented an effective customer call centre, where staff could take orders from the sales force, process orders from customers and check the status of customer shipments and invoices."

Joseph Helo investigated as many options as possible in order to provide Sanofi-Synthélabo with the most cost-effective, efficient solution.

"In February 2002, I'd only ever heard of IP telephony," said Helo. "But having

concerns about the future of PABX technology, I decided it was a good time to investigate this new technology. Our existing PABX system was a managed service from Alcatel, which had been installed in 1995. With the growth we were experiencing, we were finding our phone system was not offering the functionality we needed.

"We were unable to obtain statistical analysis reports regarding our phone system – such as time waiting, missed calls, etc. The only way we could find out exactly how efficient our customer interactions were, would have been to ask questions and fill out a report – a process that would have proved time-consuming to our clients.

"The PABX system was also proving extremely expensive. Every time we employed a new staff member, we had to call out an engineer to patch in a new extension and reprogram the PABX system. The system was also limited by the number of extensions available and we were fast approaching our ceiling.

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"This particular system also required specific handsets which were now obsolete, so we ended up having to buy second-hand handsets from other companies that had, more often than not, taken the plunge and upgraded to an IP telephony solution.

Helo investigated three options including a new PABX, a Hybrid IP PABX or a pure Cisco IP Telephony solution. Cisco System's Certified Partner arranged a visit to the Cisco lab so that Helo could witness first hand an IP telephony solution in action. He was instantly convinced of the long-term ROI benefits of IP telephony.

"Most PABX managed services are centred around a hardware solution and every six to seven years your phone system becomes outdated and you upgrade.

"Not so with the Cisco IP Telephony solution. By its very nature, the entire system is scalable because it's software driven. One generation of telephone system can remain with your company and if your needs grow or there's an update to your system, you can simply download the required software from the Internet."

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THE SOLUTION

IN AUGUST 2002, SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO COMPLETED ITS RELOCATION TO THE NORTH RYDE OFFICE AND SET UP THEIR FIRST AUSTRALIAN CALL CENTRE.

The PABX system was replaced with Cisco's Architecture for Voice, Video and Integrated Data (AVVID).

A Cisco Catalyst 3524 powered switch connects the 120 Cisco 7940 IP handsets, which are used in the call centre, the public areas and meeting rooms. Sanofi-Synthélabo also invested in 30 Cisco 7910 IP handsets.

There are two Cisco CallManagers for load sharing and redundancy. The two CallManagers work in tandem; if one fails, the second automatically steps in and routes all of the incoming calls.

The CallManager software runs under Windows 2000® on a Compaq server to provide an operator and call centre functionality, and unified messaging.

"We have configured four different call centre queues including IT, Med Info, Reception and Customer Service with multiple attendants (operators) for each," said Helo.

"Even though each of the queues are independent of the others in term of operators, opening times, music, auto attend options and messages, they all can be managed from one central location. At present, we only need one IT member of staff to manage changes to the call centres and produce reports and statistics. With a relatively short amount of time that we have been using the system, we have been able to produce meaningful statistical data from the system to help with decision making within the business.

Calls come into the operators at Sanofi-Synthélabo, who are able to process them using software that runs under Microsoft® Windows®, and enables them to see on their computer screens the individual phone status, user locations, their availability/return time, in addition to any specific instructions to the operator, such as, "Out on location, please forward to my mobile." This means they can distribute calls quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation and through to the Call Centre. When customers are transferred to the call centre, their calls are distributed to first available or most appropriate person. If a caller is waiting, a queuing mechanism plays courtesy announcements and continue options.

To interface their AVVID solution directly on to their 2Mb ISDN link, Sanofi-Synthélabo installed a Cisco VG 200, which connects the Cisco IP Telephony solution network to Public Switched Telephone Network. Analogue devices that can also be connected to a Cisco VG 200 include legacy telephones, fax machines and voice conference units.

On the data network side, the Cisco VG 200 provides an auto-sensing 10/100 Ethernet port.

THE RESULT

FOR SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO THE KEY BENEFITS FROM THEIR IP TELEPHONY SOLUTION INCLUDE SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS ON THE INSTALLATION, ONGOING ADMINISTRATION SAVINGS AND IMPROVED FUNCTIONALITY FOR THEIR CALL CENTRE, LEADING TO BETTER CUSTOMER CARE.

Helo explains: "By choosing a Cisco AVVID converged network solution we have reduced our cabling costs by one third – saving us between \$60,000 and \$70,000. We only need to cable for the data network and no telephone system copper cabling is required.

"Staff have adapted quickly to the new technology and appreciate the features of the IP handsets. Nine training sessions were organised which enabled our call centre operators to learn the finer features of the phones, which can display XML pages and provide call information, such as call duration, caller ID and call waiting.

"With the IP telephony system in place, the call centre staff can quickly view all calls in the queue. Once through to the extension a caller requires and there's no answer, the IP handsets can be configured to let the customers know where the person they are trying to call is, including in a meeting, on holiday or away ill as well as their expected return time.

"Staff at Sanofi-Synthélabo can leave specific text notes on their IP handsets for reception to pass on to specific callers and it's easy for staff to customise their own extension and adopt their own call diversion path.

"Reception can access all other telephone numbers for a member of staff's mobile, home, associate, pager and divert calls to them with one click."

Helo has also found the IP telephony system easy to manage and administer inhouse, resulting in further cost savings.



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He comments: "This solution is software driven, so we can administer it using basic html code and back it up on our server. We can also manage staff phone changes ourselves, either by installing a new extension or by unplugging the handset and moving it to the new location. We've calculated this saves us around \$150 per extension.

"This is a vast improvement from the old PABX system, which required a lot of expensive support and resources."

THE PARTNERSHIPS

WHEN IMPLEMENTING A LEADING EDGE IP TELEPHONY SOLUTION, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO WORK WITH A COMPREHENSIVE ARCHITECTURAL BLUEPRINT AND RELIABLE PARTNERS. WORKING CLOSELY WITH CISCO SYSTEMS AND A CISCO CERTIFIED PARTNER, SANOFI-SYNTHÉLABO WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE A SUCCESSFUL ROLL-OUT THAT MET ALL OF THEIR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES.

"When Sanofi-Synthélabo initially approached us, they came armed with a carefully prepared, ten-page document detailing the needs for their new location," said Paul Todd, Voice Business Development Manager, Cisco Systems. "However, they had never seen a working IP telephony solution so we arranged a visit to the Cisco IP Telephony lab. Once at the lab, Joseph Helo and his team quickly saw how the technology worked and how easy it was to deploy and administer.

"We also arranged a visit to one of our customers who had already installed a Cisco IP Telephony solution, to showcase the solution from a customer's point of view. This enabled Joseph and his team to understand all possibilities and ask about the good points of the solution and if there were any failures."

Joseph Helo was confident working with Cisco Systems because they had a proven track record for implementing this kind of technology into other businesses. They also provided Sanofi-Synthélabo with reference sites as well as attending executive briefings to demonstrate the technology in action.

"Cisco Systems has a very good implementation methodology and we were able to rely heavily on their experience to help us develop and adopt the technology to suit our business needs," said Joseph Helo.

"With a Cisco IP Telephony solution, we were also able to implement a managed contact centre and communications environment with a high level of reporting ability and visibility and control for their managers across the entire enterprise."



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