

CISCO WINNERS

reaping the rewards

In early 2008, Cisco and *My Business* staged a competition, the Cisco Small Business Makeover, to find small businesses that wanted to change the way their businesses communicated. The prize was \$50,000 of Cisco equipment for each winner, plus installation services from a Cisco partner.

Over the coming months, the Technology Editor at *My Business*, Simon Sharwood, will catch up with all the winners to learn about the new equipment they selected and how it has improved their business. For this issue, he met Sydney Day Nursery and Select Scooters, and learnt how each has put its Cisco products to work.

Sydney Day Nursery (SDN) operates 21 child care centres across New South Wales. That breadth of service is doubtless appreciated by parents, but was not always welcomed by the company's IT Administrator, Mark Chan, who entered Cisco's Small Business Makeover in the hope of winning networking equipment that would enable him to spend less time travelling to the company's sites.

"If I can work remotely, it will be faster, cleaner and greener," he told *My Business* in April 2008, at the gala lunch where SDN was selected as the lucky winner of \$50,000 of Cisco equipment, plus the assistance of a Cisco partner to install their new systems.

Fast-forward six months, and Chan is now starting to see his vision become reality. The company has installed a virtual private network that connects its five administrative offices and has nearly completed links to all of its child care centres.

"The sites we have already deployed works well," says Chan. "I can dial in to the server and do IT administration work," removing the need for the travel he so loathed. Best of all, he can now see how



Mark Chan of Sydney Day Nursery

the time he once spent in the car being put to better use.

"The new network really opens up the possibilities for our users," he says. "We have the tools we need to do online backup, install an intranet or create remote applications."

SDN has also received some Cisco unified communications equipment as part of its prize and Chan says these tools are making a big difference for staff in the child care centres.

"The staff are really, really happy about it," he says. "Previously, there was only phone in the whole centre and that was in

the office. When parents called up to speak with their kids, the child had to come into the office." This presented the problem of persuading a pre-schooler to enter the office, while also raising the issue of how to maintain the right ratio of carers to kids when one carer takes a child to the phone. The centre's new Cisco equipment means it still has just one phone line, but has also gained six extensions.

"We can transfer a call into the room where a child is playing," Chan says. "That makes a big difference to the staff and the kids."

Revvng up customer service and sales

Melbourne's Select Scooters is enjoying something of a boom. "The state of the economy and the price of petrol are keeping us very busy," says the company's General Manager Hollie Black.

So busy, in fact, that the company has run into some nice problems. "We have had such a run on scooters that stock levels change from one moment to the next," Black explains. "It's hard to keep up and record accurate inventory levels."

In the past, the company coped with this problem by, literally, shouting through at staff on the warehouse floor to ask them if items customers requested were in stock. "We used to holler out the window of the office, down to the warehouse," Black says.

Now that the company has acquired Cisco unified communications equipment, ►

BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY



Hollie Black and her brother Tim Black, National Sales Manager of Select Scootas.

it operates far more elegantly and efficiently. "We have five portable phones," Black says. These phones connect to the company's PBX over Wi-Fi, the radio system used for internet access in many homes and offices.

Calls are carried as data, using Voice over Internet Protocol. Now, when Select Scooters' sales team take calls from customers, they simply carry their new cordless phones into the company's warehouse so they can see the stock customers wish to discuss.

This arrangement improves customer service. Instead of putting customers on hold, the sales people can continue the conversation as they move from their desks to the warehouse. The company's spare parts team have also been equipped with the cordless phones and are using them in similar ways, again moving from their desks to the shelves of the warehouse to visually identify products for customers. Black says this arrangement is also improving customer service, while also creating the chance for cross-sales and upselling.

"The spare parts people know the products and because they can see the item customers want, they can use their expertise to advise about the best parts and the best solutions," she says. This translates into cross-selling opportunities

as spare parts staff advise customers of accessories that will enhance a product, or are necessary for its installation. In the latter case, it also means that the spare parts people can quickly advise customers of the need for the additional purchase and avoid the delays for the customer.

Another improvement has been wireless technology's ability to add a second line to the warehouse, which previously had just one phone line. Adding another wireless phone to the warehouse was an easy matter and has doubled the number of spare parts staff that can help customers at any one time. "It's now very rare that customers don't get through to someone in spare parts," Black says.

The company has also installed a Cisco voicemail system, another simple-but-effective enhancement to the experience it offers to customers and will, Black believes, help the company to grow. "We're saving so much time and offering a better service to customers," she says. "And no-one shouts out windows any more!" ●

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