



Cecconi's Cantina serves its customers better with the Cisco Unified Communications solution - and they're getting the message

"Cisco has a fantastic name. You just have this confidence that you are getting the best communications equipment on the market. And with that comes a brilliant solution that does the job, so we can get on and do our job. Which is to serve up great authentic Italian food."

– Maria Bortolotto, Director, Cecconi's Cantina

With more than 30 years' experience in hospitality, the Bortolotto family decided in 2006 to move the location of its authentic Italian restaurant, Cecconi's, after eight years at Melbourne's Crown Casino.

Changing its name with the move, Cecconi's Cantina took up residence in the former basement premises of another fine-dining restaurant, Langton's, which was once home to the Herald & Weekly Times newspaper group.

The Bortolottos included their incumbent phone system in the move uptown, replacing the phone set-up used by Langton's with their own.

Although the new dining space was smaller, the phone was no less important to the business. Nor were there fewer demands made on the phone system.

"The way we use our phones in the restaurant, calls are never put on hold," says Maria Bortolotto, one of four directors at Cecconi's Cantina. "We answer the phone because our phones are our business."

Business challenge

After 10 years, the restaurant's owners decided it was time to upgrade to a new phone system. "It was just time," explains Bortolotto. "We wanted a phone system that was up to date and offered greater functionality, particularly with messaging."

They also wanted a system that was simple to use and was well supported, having experienced a somewhat rocky beginning last time. "When we did this a decade ago, the company that installed the phones went broke and all of a sudden we were left holding a system we didn't know how to program. It took six months before we found someone to properly help us," Bortolotto says.

"The supplier and the support behind it were both very important to us when thinking about buying new equipment because we need our phones working 24 hours a day. In the restaurant trade, service is everything. Customers don't like waiting, we understand that, and we wouldn't expect anything less from our suppliers."

Solution

Cisco Business Partner Netco was introduced through a mutual acquaintance to Cecconi's. The solutions provider firstly took a look at what the restaurant had in place.

There were eight phone extensions that covered all sections of the restaurant: four lines ran to the back of house; two were located at reception; one for the beverage manager was in the bar; and one was in the kitchen.

It wasn't difficult sorting out what Cecconi's needed. Netco chose Cisco's Unified Communications 500 (UC500) Series with capacity for 16 users, which is ideally suited for small business. "The UC500 is a compact, cost-effective solution for smaller operators, which doesn't compromise on functionality," says Kim Chandler, Netco's business development manager. "A small business doesn't need to look any further. This covers every possible communications need ... and more."

The perfect complement to the UC500 was Cisco's range of Unified IP Phones. Netco recommended the Cisco Unified IP Phone 7970, featuring a high-resolution colour touch-screen display, for seven of the restaurant's extensions and a Cisco Unified IP Phone 7941 for the kitchen, which was connected via a CAT 5 cable.

Cisco's IP Phones can also be used to access a variety of information services, such as stock prices, staff directories, and web-based content.

A Cisco IP Communicator was loaded onto Maria Bortolotto's laptop computer. This gave her a soft phone that worked like another phone extension when she was away from the restaurant.

"It was all done very quickly without fuss," Chandler says. "The system was configured off-site, the equipment was installed in a day and we changed the phones over after hours."

Netco didn't only look at Cecconi's equipment needs but took a more global view of the establishment's set-up, including its telephone plans. Previously it was spending about \$1,200 a month on calls and line rental.

As part of its solution, Netco included eight Business Advantage lines on a 60-month contract. "Under the terms of the Netco contract, we provided Cecconi's with \$800 in call credits, which means the owners agreed to spend a minimum of \$800 a month," Chandler explains. "But that's all they pay. The effective cost of the Cisco communications system to Cecconi's was zero dollars."

Results

Improved messaging

An integral part of any Cisco Unified Communications System, including the UC500 installed in Cecconi's, is Cisco's Unified IP Interactive Voice Response (IP IVR). With IVR, users like Bortolotto can exercise greater control over calls coming into the restaurant – where they are directed, for instance, or how they are picked up.

"With the old phones, we could only put on one message at a time," says Bortolotto. "With the Cisco solution, we now can have three, four or more messages for different occasions like Christmas, Easter and so on, at the push of a button.

"That's the kind of simple but powerful functionality we need. It's all about making sure we can control our phones in way that enables us to improve overall customer satisfaction."

Lower costs, greater support

Previously the restaurant's phone bill was \$1,200 a month, with flag-fall charges accounting for a significant portion of the costs.

"They were getting fleeced," says Chandler. "We were able to offer them a solution that effectively provided them the Cisco equipment at zero cost by agreeing to spend a minimum of \$800 a month over a 60-month period."

With the Cisco IP Communicator, Bortolotto is also able to save on phone costs when she calls the restaurant from her laptop computer at home or another remote location. "The IP Communicator effectively works like another extension," says Chandler.

The UC500 also includes wireless connectivity, so Bortolotto can use the soft phone on her laptop as a wireless handset when she's anywhere within the restaurant. In addition, she can set up the system so her voicemail can be emailed as an audio file to her inbox.

Bortolotto says she has greater peace of mind now, knowing she has a reputable supplier in Cisco and a single point of contact in Netco to provide backup and training.

“What I really love about the Cisco handsets is that we can feature our logo on the handset’s large colour LCD screen. It just adds a classy touch.”

Classy handsets

In many instances it is the effectiveness and efficiency of the switches and routers that are important to the business. But for Bortolotto, the Cisco handsets are just as important.

“I love them. Not just because they’re easy to use but also they’re appealing to look at,” Bortolotto says. “That’s especially important to us because the phones, particularly the ones at reception, are a part of the restaurant furniture – they add to the overall tone of the place. We put a lot of effort into making sure the table and chairs and linen and cutlery look right for the restaurant. Why not the phones?”

“What I really love about the Cisco handsets is that we can feature our logo on the handset’s large colour LCD screen. It just adds a classy touch.”

A directory with each phone also allows staff to quickly call up frequently dialled numbers as well as keep a track of calls made and received.

More functionality

Bortolotto knows she has only scratched the surface when it comes to taking greater advantage of the Cisco Unified Communications solution.

“I’m looking forward to discovering the full potential of the Cisco phone system,” says Bortolotto.

Two features she sees possibly taking advantage of with time is Cisco Unified CallConnector and Unified Presence.

CallConnector streamlines the way you communicate. For instance, users can dial contacts in Microsoft Outlook by simply clicking the phone number on the screen. With Presence, you can keep tabs on where people are, when they’re available and how they can be reached.

“I’m up for anything that means a service-centric, people-focused business like ours can communicate better and more efficiently not only with our customers but among our staff as well,” says Bortolotto. “I am confident the Cisco Unified Communications solution enables us to do that.”

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