



Porsche drives up customer service, maps out future directions with Cisco's Unified Communications solution

"Cisco's Unified Communications solution has addressed our immediate problems with call drop-outs and wireless coverage issues, so our staff don't miss important customer calls. But in the longer term, the integrated IP system will accommodate our business' future voice and data needs and improve the way we operate."

– Tim Barwisch, Group IT Manager for Porsche Cars Australia

When Norman Hamilton began importing Porsche cars in 1951, less than two were sold in Australia each year. More than 50 years later, Porsche Cars Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of Porsche AG, responsible for annual sales of more than 1,000 cars a year from its national headquarters in Melbourne, which opened in 1998.

Australia was Porsche's first right-hand drive market and one of its first export territories. The local subsidiary has enjoyed a very close relationship with the factory since the marque's earliest days.

Business challenge

An important ingredient of Porsche's success in Australia has been its long-term relationship with its customers. If you're going to spend northward of \$100,000 on a motor vehicle, you're likely to be the kind of customer who is going to expect a high quality of service. And that includes prompt attention and response.

An aging PABX telephone system, however, was jeopardising Porsche's reputation for uncompromising service, and placing unnecessary stress on the company's sales team.

"The analogue wireless phone system we had in place suffered lots of problems simply because it had grown old and unreliable," says Tim Barwisch, Group IT Manager for Porsche Cars Australia. "We experienced dropped calls, lost calls and dead spots from insufficient wireless coverage.

"On top of that, it was inefficient transferring callers. A Porsche customer doesn't expect to have to wait. They're busy people usually after an immediate answer."

Porsche Cars Australia had to show patience, however, while its parent, Porsche AG, reviewed two phone systems, one of which was Cisco.

Solution

Initially, Porsche considered installing another PABX telephone system. But after a little more homework realised Internet Protocol (IP) telephony provided the company with greater flexibility and far more options.

"We wanted to link any new system to our Lotus Notes and email systems so we could use it for more than a straight-forward telephone set-up," says Barwisch. "Voice over IP (VoIP) was the natural way to go."

Solutions provider Comscentre recommended a Cisco Unified Communications solution that incorporated full wireless voice and data connectivity. It included Cisco Aironet wireless infrastructure and Call Manager software, a Cisco 2851 Integrated Services Router, as well as Cisco 7941 Unified IP Phones and 7921 Wireless IP Phones.

Porsche took advantage of a total refurbishment of its Collingwood premises to revamp its communications infrastructure. Comscentre installed the system. With direction from Germany, the company took charge of implementing the switching, routers and eight wireless access points that promised blanket phone coverage of the Porsche Centre.

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Each sales member was provided two Cisco phones: one fixed to the desk and one cordless for roaming. A further wireless handset was given to the workshop supervisor and one was shared between every pair of technicians.

“It was important the Cisco Unified Communications solution made it easy for customers to reach the right person the first time they called,” says Comscentre’s Victorian Distribution Manager, Scott Earle.

Initially the system was installed in Porsche’s Melbourne headquarters. But Earle says the prestige car manufacturer has plans ultimately to extend the IP telephony system to up to 12 sites across Australia.

“Comscentre is looking to build out the Cisco solution into Porsche’s showrooms in Sydney and its warehouse and training centre in the Melbourne suburb of Tullamarine,” says Earle.

Longer term, Comscentre plans to create an IP voice and data network for Porsche that connects to all its dealers around Australia. And Porsche’s Barwisch can’t see why the local network can’t be pushed out globally.

Results

Better coverage and communications

Immediately, Cisco’s Unified Communications solution has provided the Melbourne Porsche Centre with complete wireless coverage, which solved the problem of call dropouts.

Improved customer service

Porsche’s team of sales and account managers can now respond quickly to enquiries and calls from its high-profile clientele. With either their desk phone or wireless handset, they can pick up calls, anywhere on site. This ensures customers receive the high standard of service they expect from a top-class marque like Porsche.

“Staff are up and down all day long. Wireless is absolutely critical. It’s their lifeline,” says Barwisch.

Lower costs, simpler administration

The cost of calling over the IP backbone will fall dramatically once the Melbourne local telephony environment is fully linked into its other sites in Sydney and Tullamarine.

“Most of the benefits of using VoIP will come when we have a fully functioning integrated system,” says Barwisch.

Barwisch is also keen to take advantage of the system’s videoconferencing capabilities once it establishes an IP connection with its national dealership network. “One option is to supply each dealer with an IP handset, which they keep in the boardroom for conference calls with head office.”

Such a telephony environment can more easily be managed from a central location. When it’s integrated with Lotus Notes diary, reception can easily track staff movements.

“Rather than transferring a call, our receptionist can quickly see whether I’m in or out of the office and when I’ll be back,” explains Barwisch.

He also sees the advantage in having soft phones loaded onto staff laptops, which keep staff in touch, much like a mobile phone, when they’re not in the office.

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Greater flexibility and control

A fully integrated Cisco unified communications solution can be deployed to streamline, or consolidate, the company’s operations.

“If Porsche wants to incorporate a global application, we have global architecture that allows the company to do it,” says Simon Bahen, Victoria’s Territory Market Manager. “Whether it’s an enterprise resource planning system checking on ordered parts, or a system for customer relationship management, warehouse management or global tracking, it can integrate seamlessly with Cisco’s Call Manager platform.

“Although Porsche Cars Australia is not using the solution’s full functionality today, it has the intelligent network platform in place to scale when required. That’s the beauty of the solution.”

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