



Security Manufacturer Increases Contact Center Agent Productivity and Sales

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Security Lock Distributors

INDUSTRY

- Manufacturing and sales

EMPLOYEES

- 60

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Increase contact center agent productivity and sales
- Give supervisors and agents visibility into queues
- Improve service to high-value customers
- Simplify contact center management

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco Unified CallManager delivers IP-based call processing and support for intelligent telephony applications.
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition provides integration of ACD and IVR functions, offers a single, integrated service creation environment, and interoperates with Cisco Unified CallManager.
- Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging supports voice, e-mail, and fax messaging from a single mailbox.

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Sales agents can answer more calls, a result of screen pops and competency-based routing.
- Agent sales increased 30 to 40 percent.
- Headcount dropped 10 to 15 percent.
- High-value customers receive service priority.
- Detailed contact center reporting helps optimize staffing and improve customer service.
- Return on investment (ROI) was achieved in less than 12 months.

Security Lock Distributors used Cisco® solutions to deliver a better customer experience and streamline contact center processes.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

For Security Lock Distributors of Westwood, Massachusetts, the inbound contact center is fundamental to its success. A leading distributor of life safety, security, and access control products, the company has no outside sales force, instead relying on 40 technical telephone salespeople in three contact centers: at headquarters, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Pompano Beach, Florida. “If the phones do not ring, we do not make money,” says Barry Silver, director of IT.

In 2001, the company purchased a new headquarters building in Massachusetts, inheriting the previous occupant’s time-division-multiplexed (TDM) private-branch-exchange (PBX) switch. The company soon realized that the traditional switch hampered sales potential. Chief among its liabilities was that it supported only one call queue. “Our salespeople have highly specialized technical knowledge pertaining to electronics and mechanics,” says Silver. “Without separate queues for technical sales and customer service, top salespeople might be busy for 5 minutes helping a customer with an invoicing question, while customer service people might be asked questions about voltage requirements. Neither situation helps sales or service levels.”

Another shortcoming of the traditional switch was that salespeople could not see how many callers, or which callers, were in the queue. Only the vice president could see this information, and to inform agents that a queue had formed, he constantly made announcements on the overhead paging system. “Without visibility into the queue, agents and supervisors were unaware of incoming calls, and customers had to wait upwards of 3 or 4 minutes,” says Silver. “In these situations we would experience high abandon rates as customers simply disconnected to call another supplier. Companies in our industry offer similar products, so the major way we differentiate ourselves is through superior customer service. Long queues are unacceptable.”

Finally, a lack of reporting capabilities in the traditional system prevented Security Lock Distributors from staffing optimally; “To determine the busiest time of day or day of the week, we would have had to analyze a 300-page phone bill, a process that could take hours,” says Silver. Without ready access to call volumes and abandoned call rates by time of day, the company could not base its staffing decisions on definitive data. “We were staffing everyone early in the morning and giving them all the same lunch breaks,” says Silver. “In fact, it wasn’t until we installed our new Cisco contact center solution that we discovered that 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. was actually our busiest time.”

Company executives conducted a round-table discussion about improving the customer experience. “We asked, ‘If we could change just one thing, what would it be?’ ” Silver recalls. “The unanimous

answer was the phone system. In a contact center environment, the communications solution defines our ability to provide the best possible customer service.”

NETWORK SOLUTION

After interviewing company executives and contact center agents to understand their business needs, Silver arrived at the following criteria for a new contact center solution:

- Intelligently routing calls to the agent most qualified to meet the caller’s need
- Giving supervisors insight into the contact center so they could staff at the appropriate levels and manage agents’ performance
- Providing the flexibility to change business procedures in real time—for example, by routing callers from a particular area code to a different contact center

In addition, the company wanted to purchase an IP-based switch, in order to route calls over the Category 5 cabling installed throughout the building when it was purchased. A TDM-based switch would require extending the existing Category 3 cabling to more locations, and replacing old wiring and nonworking drops.

After evaluating leading contact center solutions, Security Lock Distributors chose Cisco® Unified Contact Center Express Edition, which is part of the Cisco Business Communications Solution. The Cisco Business Communications Solution provides the foundation and applications businesses need to be more competitive, responsive, and productive. Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition is a single-server, integrated contact-center-in-a-box that provides independence in agent location, improves agent scalability, and provides powerful automatic call distributor (ACD) features, such as conditional routing, call-in-queue and expected-wait-time messages, enterprise data displays, real-time data, and historical reporting together with integrated interactive-voice-response (IVR) services. Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition provides true integration of ACD and IVR functions, offers a single, integrated service creation environment, and interoperates with the Cisco Unified CallManager call-processing solution. “Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition is 100-percent IP-based, whereas the other products are hybrids,” says Silver. “It has more flexibility in terms of establishing and changing queues. Most importantly, we knew and trusted Cisco and its reputation and were confident we would receive a solid solution.”

The solution also includes Cisco Unified IP phones for all employees, and a Cisco Unity Unified Messaging server. In the past, if a customer asked a question that the sales agent could not answer, the agent had to walk down the sales floor to find someone who knew. With Cisco Unity Unified Messaging, salespeople can simply record a voice message and send it as a sound file to the entire sales distribution group. Faster answers to customer questions improve customer service as well as agent productivity.

Working closely with its system integrator, Security Lock Distributors began with a discovery process, identifying the various contact center scenarios and how to optimize their sales potential. The company identified priority routing for ‘platinum’ customers as an effective way to differentiate service. Priority routing, which lets high-value customers advance to the head of the queue, requires a combination of IVR functions, which are built into Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition, and integration with a customer database. Security Lock Distributors identified its top 100 and 500 customers in its Structured Query Language (SQL) database for priority routing. Network planners then used the built-in tools within Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition to integrate with the database. Security Lock Distributors collects the caller’s telephone number and queries the SQL database to determine priority before the caller hears the first ring.

To further increase sales, Security Lock Distributors also wanted to route customer calls to the available agent best suited to the call. Whereas skills-based routing, a feature of many contact center solutions, considers whether the agent has a sales or customer service skill, competency routing, a unique feature of Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition, also considers the agent’s experience level, from 1 to 10. If two available agents have the sales skill and one has a higher competency rating, that agent receives the call. “Competency routing helps us avoid sending a top customer to a brand-new agent, for example,” says Silver.

Finally, the company wanted to provide “screen pops,” or on-screen alert messages, for the agents when they received a call, providing the customer’s name, contact information, and contact history. This would improve the customer experience and also reduce the call length, freeing salespeople to take more sales calls in the same amount of time while also saving the company money in incoming toll charges.

Security Lock Distributors upgraded to an end-to-end Cisco Systems® network infrastructure. “Network and communications resilience are essential for our company because our revenue depends entirely on the availability of the contact center,” says Silver. Therefore, the company deployed redundant Cisco Unified CallManager servers so that if one failed, the other could take over transparently.

Both Cisco Unified CallManager servers and the Cisco Unity server reside at the headquarters location. The other two contact centers connect to the Cisco Unified CallManager servers over the company’s Frame Relay–based WAN. Employees can call each other in any office by dialing a four-digit extension, saving time and eliminating intercompany long-distance costs. If the WAN link between the remote contact centers and headquarters becomes unavailable, the remote contact centers take advantage of Cisco Unified Survivable Remote Site Telephony (SRST), a built-in feature of the Cisco IOS® Software in their routers, to connect to the public switched telephone network (PSTN).

Security Lock Distributors planned to transfer to Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition but, through an error, the carrier took the lines three days ahead of time—a mistake that Security Lock Distributors realized only when the phones stopped ringing abruptly one afternoon. “Just to see what would happen, we initiated the Cisco Unified CallManager system, and Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition began working immediately, just as we had configured it,” says Silver. “Agents simply logged in and began receiving calls as they had minutes ago—except now they had screen pops, personal queues, and visibility into their queues.”

To cater to customers who prefer to work with a specific salesperson, Security Lock Distributors wanted customers to be able to request them by entering a code—a difficult task if everyone is logged into the general queue. Network planners solved the challenge by configuring Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition to set up an individual queue for each salesperson. Now each salesperson belongs to two queues: the general queue and an individual queue. If customers respond to the IVR prompt by selecting a particular salesperson, the calls are routed to individual queues. If a salesperson is on the phone, customers hear a message inviting them to wait, leave a message, or speak to another representative.

Security Lock Distributors also deployed a custom application that helps salespeople better manage their time by providing visibility into the queues, showing how many people are waiting in both the general queue and personal queue. A salesperson on a non-sales-related call who knows that callers are waiting in the personal queue will usually choose to quickly end the call to answer the sales calls. In addition, the application has replaced the constant overhead paging alerts about queue length with color-coded warnings on each agent’s screen, accompanied by audio warnings played as WAV files. A system integrator enhanced the application to show the identities of callers in the queue so that salespeople can accept the highest-value callers first. “Agents now have the ability, with the click of a mouse, to pick a caller in their personal queue,” says Silver. “We believe this pick system will help the agents enhance service to our repeat and loyal customers and improve their time management.”

BUSINESS RESULTS

Security Lock Distributors has been fielding 1400 calls per day to its three contact centers—a metric that Silver knows thanks to the built-in reporting in Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition. Since the company deployed Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition, queue time dropped from about 2 minutes to less than 20 seconds for 90 percent of calls. In addition, agent productivity has increased. “When we did not have priority routing, my best sales agent might spend 4 or 5 minutes helping a customer look up an invoice—time subtracted from sales efforts,” says Silver.

According to Scott Carlisle, the top sales agent for Security Lock Distributors, “The new phone system has made me more efficient and better able to manage incoming calls. I can handle the calls more quickly because screen pops tell me who is calling, sparing me the time it used to take to gather customer information.” Carlisle also appreciates the efficiency gains from having a personal queue. “On the old system I had three lines to handle: one queue and two personal lines. By answering queue calls I was actually hurting myself because personal calls would go to voicemail, costing me the time to listen to the message and return the call.” Now Carlisle answers more calls because his customers have the option to hold.

Increased agent productivity translates to higher sales. “Our average productivity increase per agent is 30 percent, and one sales agent had a 40-percent increase,” says Silver. The average agent increased the number of orders taken by 18 percent and increased sales by 17 percent. Overall, the company’s sales were up 80 percent over the previous year. One reason is that salespeople can take sales calls only, and another is that shorter queues reduce the number of abandoned calls. Yet another factor in higher sales is the ability to determine which customers abandoned calls, and call them back. One day the carrier made an error that resulted in customers’ receiving a busy signal or number-disconnected notice. Upon discovering the problem, the company instantly ran an Abandoned Call report from Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition and called the customers who had hung up, gaining sales that otherwise would have been lost, and strengthening the company’s image as a customer service-focused organization.

The company’s customers call a single 800 number, and then the Cisco Unified CallManager server routes the calls to the appropriate contact center based on the caller’s area code. The routing flexibility in Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition helps ensure business resiliency by helping the company change routing rules when the unexpected occurs: “When hurricanes hit Florida, I simply added skill sets to our Massachusetts agents to the Florida queues, so we never missed a beat,” says Silver. “Not only does centralized management help us better manage our people, it helps us keep the contact center flowing.”

The routing flexibility of Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition also helps Security Lock Distributors flexibly reassign the operator queue based on time of day. During the early morning hours, for example, the server routes the operator queue to salespeople themselves, on a rotating basis. A screen pop notifies them that the call is from the operator queue so they know to greet the caller appropriately. During business hours, a dedicated operator answers these calls, and after 5:30 p.m. Eastern time, the Nevada agents become operators. “Anything that we’ve dreamed of doing, we can do now with Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition,” says Silver. “In addition, we’ve reduced the number of telecom lines by 25 percent and we achieved ROI in less than 12 months.”

Since deploying Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition, Security Lock Distributors can route calls to agents who work from home. “Good salespeople who are knowledgeable in this industry are rare,” says Silver. “Now that we can support home-based agents, we do not have to restrict our hiring to people who live near one of our three offices. They can live anywhere in the country. And we save on office space and furniture, as well.” The company has already set up a home office for a top sales agent who had recently moved from Nevada to Utah. Her home office setup includes Cisco Agent Desktop for Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition, a Cisco Unified IP phone, and a Cisco 1721 modular access router for VPN connectivity. The company is in the process of hiring another agent on the east coast and adopting the Cisco Enterprise Teleworker Architecture solution, which will make it even easier to hire qualified sales agents in different parts of the country. “If an agent is motivated to work from home, in my experience they tend to be among the most productive,” says Silver. “We would have lost this woman, and yet because Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition supports home agents, we could keep her employed, and it’s showing in her productivity and our profitability.”

Now supervisors and executives can see agent performance at a glance, including which agents are logged in and how many calls they’re taking. “One vice president likes to say, ‘All the trees in the forest have been cut down, so we have a clear view,’ ” says Silver. The easy-to-understand reports also help the company determine whether the contact centers are understaffed or overstaffed during a given time period. For example, the company determined that it was understaffed between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. By eliminating overstaffing, Security Lock Distributors reduced staffing by 10 to 15 percent without affecting service levels.

Security Lock Distributors can monitor and manage its contact centers centrally, from a Web interface. Supervisors can easily place agents into a ready or not-ready state. Executives can gain earlier awareness of call volume trends so they can take action such as adjusting staff or launching new marketing campaigns. And IT staff can fix problems without leaving their desks. “It’s been a dream to have centralized management,” says Silver. “In the past we had three separate systems, one in each location, and if a problem arose we’d have to fly there.”

Moves, adds, and changes are a constant in contact center environments, and Security Lock Distributors previously paid a third party \$250 an hour to add ports and repunch wires. Now, with Cisco Unified CallManager and Cisco Unified IP phones, contact center agents simply disconnect their phones and reconnect them in the new location. Their phone number, settings, and personal queues follow them to the new location.

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Unified CallManager
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition
- Cisco Unity Unified Messaging
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7912, 7920, 7940G, and 7960G
- Cisco Unified IP Phone 7914 Expansion Module
- Cisco IP Conference Station 7935
- Cisco 2651XM routers

Cisco Unified Contact Center Express Edition creates a competitive advantage for Security Lock Distributors by improving customer service through shorter queues, priority routing, competency-based routing, and the ability to support home-based agents. The ability to manage multiple sites as a centrally managed virtual contact center eases administration. And giving agents themselves visibility into their queues has empowered them to better manage their own performance. Carlisle, the top producer, summarizes: “The new phone system serves as a motivator for me. I frequently access statistics and call logs to check myself. I can see all the statistics of my phone activity during the day, and continually try to better myself by increasing call volume and reducing missed calls.”

Using the Cisco Smart Business Roadmap, Security Lock Distributors can continue to enhance the Cisco Business Communications Solution at the pace that’s right for them. The Cisco Smart Business Roadmap provides a structured, planned evolution path that will help the company take advantage of today’s business opportunities and maximize the potential of its technology investments for years to come.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Cisco Business Communications Solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/ipc>.

For more information about Cisco Customer Contact solutions, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/cc>.

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