



MAIN STREET PARTNERS

OPTS FOR INTEGRATED CISCO COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

“WITH MCG, WE CHOSE AN EXTREMELY PROFESSIONAL PARTNER THAT OFFERED US EXCELLENT SERVICE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR NEW INFRASTRUCTURE. CISCO CAN THEREFORE LAY CLAIM TO AN OUTSTANDING SALES AND PARTNER CHANNEL. BOTH MCG’S AND CISCO’S SERVICE WAS IMPECCABLE. THINGS WERE DIFFERENT WITH OUR PREVIOUS PROVIDER, EVEN THOUGH THEY TOO WERE A BIG PLAYER. THERE WERE LONG WAITING TIMES FOR EVERY ADJUSTMENT TO THE SYSTEM WHICH SOMETIMES MEANT OUR TELEPHONE LINES WERE DOWN FOR EXTENDED PERIODS.”

Alain Donckers, Managing Director, Main Street Partners

Main Street Partners (MSP) moved from Charleroi to the flourishing region south of Brussels in 2006. The company moved into an office in Wavre’s business district in order to carry out its new principle activity: recruiting SAP consultants and developers. In that new, more centrally located office, MSP needed to provide both IT and telephone services for its employees. It was therefore on the lookout for the best solution with a view to the long-term. With its new activity, the company’s telephone traffic had already increased considerably and the small exchange was unable to support the increasing level of traffic. MSP therefore considered the option of installing an IP telephone exchange.

As a former ERP integrator itself, MSP came into regular contact with Cisco clients. MSP was therefore well aware of Cisco’s outstanding reputation and the quality of its products. On the basis of feedback from its clients, MSP also decided to turn to Cisco technology for the communication infrastructure at its new office and went in search of a Cisco partner in the vicinity of Wavre. Through the Cisco Belgium website, the company was able to find Matias Consulting Group, a Cisco SMB Select Partner which was therefore perfectly placed to meet the needs of a small enterprise such as MSP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Main Street Partners (MSP) is specialised in the recruitment of SAP consultants and developers. In addition, the organisation also offers SAP consultancy services to a select group of clients. The company is also a distributor for Sage; ERP software designed for small to midsize businesses. Main Street Partners employs 15 people, seven of which are fulltime recruiters. The organisation has been based in Wavre since 2006 at which time it began its new principal activity: recruitment. Before then, MSP was based in Charleroi and primarily engaged in SAP consultancy.

CHALLENGE

With the change of principal activity, from SAP consultancy to recruitment of SAP specialists, Main Street Partners’ telephone traffic grew markedly. The company’s old, small telephone exchange was no longer adequate. When MSP also made the move to Wavre, it decided to look into completely renewing its communication infrastructure. Maintenance of the new system would above all have to be simplified.

SOLUTION

For the choice and installation of its new communication infrastructure, Main Street Partners contacted network specialist MCG, also based in Wavre. MCG installed the necessary cables in the new office building to converge MSP’s IT and telephone networks, thus allowing its employees to call using the computer network. For that purpose, MCG installed an IP telephone exchange, some 15 IP telephones and a Cisco router for voice and data transmissions.

RESULTS

Thanks to Cisco’s new converged network infrastructure, Main Street Partners no longer require a receptionist. All employees can have calls forwarded automatically. Thanks to the special voicemail function, they can also receive e-mails on their PDA containing messages left at the office. That way, they can react much faster to questions from clients or candidates. Moreover, MSP can now make the majority of adjustments and configurations of the telephone exchange internally without having to wait for days before an external technician is available to carry out even the most minor intervention.





“We wanted to get the latest, cutting-edge technology for our new infrastructure that would satisfy our needs for the coming five to ten years. That is why we chose IP telephony. You can upgrade the software when you need to and you’re set for years with the installed equipment. IP telephony is, after all, constantly evolving” says Alain Donckers, Managing Director of Main Street Partners.

RAPID INSTALLATION

Based on MCG’s analysis and advice, Main Street Partners gave the go ahead for the IP telephony project. The company had to wait six weeks between placing their order and taking delivery of the hardware. However once it had arrived, MCG installed the entire telephony infrastructure in just two days. That infrastructure consists of some 15 Cisco IP telephones, an IP telephone exchange or Cisco CallManager and a Cisco router for voice and data transmissions. MCG also took care of the installation of the IT infrastructure and the necessary cables. Those cables and the new IT rack now service both MSP’s IT and telephony. They therefore have only one contact person for both. Even with the short installation time, MCG were

able to install everything within the agreed transition date. Alain Donckers: “With MCG, we chose an extremely professional partner that offered us excellent service before, during and after the implementation of our new infrastructure. Cisco can therefore lay claim to an outstanding sales and partner channel. Both MCG’s and Cisco’s service was impeccable. Things were different with our previous provider, even though it was a big player. There were long waiting times for every adjustment to the system which sometimes meant our telephone lines were down for extended periods.”

Now MCG can even intervene in the telephone exchange remotely if needed thanks to the maintenance contract Main Street Partners concluded with the integrator. Moreover, MSP can make all minor adjustments, such as maintaining their directory, without outside assistance, seeing as MCG provided a short training course on the use of the IP telephones and the IP telephone exchange.

In Charleroi, there was only one person to answer and forward all incoming calls. In the new building in Wavre, the new business activity has meant that many more people have daily contact via telephone. For this reason, MSP chose for a special voicemail function. “It was important to have a backup in the event one of our colleagues was not in the office. We are often on the road in-between visiting clients or even interviewing candidates. Whenever someone leaves an urgent message for us at the office, we receive an e-mail with the message transcript on our PDA. Thanks to IP telephony, we’re able to respond much quicker,” says Alain Donckers.





NEW POSSIBILITIES

IP telephony has also brought new possibilities with it. In Charleroi, for instance, it was not possible to make conference calls. Today, thanks to Cisco's 794x IP telephones, Main Street Partners is able to make conference calls with an unlimited number of conversation partners. Another novelty is the possibility to work from home with the help of a VPN client. In future, MSP wants to give its employees the ability to call via these VPN lines.

MSP also has plans to include its largest clients in its telephone network. Although the biggest motivation behind the choice for IP telephony was not cost-related, the extended network will allow the company to eliminate expensive international call costs. In addition, MSP is also thinking of integrating its customer management system within the new telephone system. Not only would this improve the level of customer service, it would also optimise efficiency, given that employees would no longer have to search for a client's file whenever they call.

"Our new IP telephony structure is a long-term investment but one which has already borne fruit. For instance, we no longer require a receptionist, given that Cisco's CallManager automatically forwards incoming calls. Our employees' reaction times have also improved as a result. They can have their calls forwarded or opt for a written transcript of all voicemail messages and can therefore organise their time much more efficiently. Alongside user-friendliness, the service before, during and after the project has meant we can rest easy when it comes to maintenance and upgrades. Thanks to the convergence with IT, a solution can now always be found with IP telephony while with analogue telephony, you are always limited by the equipment at your disposal. Now we can install additional applications, for instance, to record the activity on one particular device. No, we haven't once regretted our decision to switch to IP telephony," concludes Alain Donckers.

