


Auxifina

Cisco IP telephony for optimal services at the call centre and a future-oriented, transparent architecture



“BY CONSISTENTLY CHOOSING CISCO FOR OUR TELEPHONY, WE NOW HAVE A VERY WELL-ORGANISED ARCHITECTURE THAT WE CAN MANAGE OURSELVES AND BUILD ON IN THE FUTURE. MOREOVER, IP TELEPHONY IS EXCELLENT FOR INTEGRATION, NOT ONLY AT THE DATA AND SPEECH LEVEL BUT ALSO WITH OTHER SYSTEMS AND ICT APPLICATIONS.”

Michel Morrier, IT manager at Auxifina

Auxifina is a financial services provider specialising in loans for private individuals. The company has seven of its own offices with a head office in Oudergem, Brussels. Moreover, it also offers its products through an extensive network of independent partners.

Recently, Auxifina decided to completely transform the telephony installation in the head office. The traditional switchboard could no longer keep up with the development of the company. It was too small and did not support enough lines to serve the growing number of staff members. Moreover, it did not offer all the functions needed by the staff, such as voicemail.

The department for customer relations, in particular, ran into problems. It gives clients information over the telephone and really acts as an internal call centre. With the existing switchboard it was almost impossible to deal with the calls efficiently. Michel Morrier, IT manager at Auxifina: “Because the system didn’t allow calls to be processed intelligently, clients had to be constantly put through to the person who could help them. It also turned out that some calls didn’t end up at the right place at all. A continuous engaged tone, unanswered calls, a message that the number did not exist, ... such problems

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Auxifina is a financial services provider specialising in loans for private individuals. The company has seven of its own offices and also offers its products through an extensive network of independent agents.

Challenge

The traditional switchboard was getting too small to serve the growing number of staff and what it could offer in terms of modern possibilities was unsatisfactory, so Auxifina decided to completely transform its telephony installation at the head office. The most important aim was to improve the services of the internal call centre. So the company went in search of a stable and intelligent system for redirecting calls. The new installation also had to provide a better insight into the activities of the call centre and support functions such as voicemail.

Solution

In the head office in Oudergem, Cisco partner Integrated Network Solutions (INS) installed a Cisco CallManager, around 50 Cisco 7910 and 7960 telephone sets and Unity, Cisco’s unified messaging system. In addition, Auxifina is using the Cisco IP Integrated Contact Distribution, a software module for optimising the communications at its call centre, with integrated Interactive Voice Response functions.

Results

Auxifina guarantees its partners and clients a reliable telephone service. The new system takes care of redirecting the calls and allows reports to be generated so that staffing levels at the call centre can be adjusted as necessary. Moreover, Auxifina is working on applications that integrate telephony with all kinds of other information sources in order to serve clients promptly. The management and maintenance of the telephony now takes place in-house. Auxifina now has a transparent, future-oriented network architecture and is also considering equipping its other offices with IP telephony.

harm the image of a company. Moreover, it was not possible to report on the telephony, to trace misdirected calls or to measure the productivity of the call centre.

So of course you had little control over the activities. With the new installation we wanted to optimise the services we provided, for our customers as well as our partners.



Flexible, future-oriented system

Auxifina opted for Cisco IP telephony for the new telephony installation. The alternatives based on traditional telephony also guaranteed an improved call centre, it's true, but they did not offer the same flexibility from the future perspective. The Cisco IP telephony system is easy to extend, adjust and to integrate with new functions and applications. In the end, that clinched it.

At the head office in Oudergem, the system integrator INS installed a CallManager – Cisco's IP switchboard – and about 50 Cisco 7910 en 7960 IP telephone sets. An additional server is on standby to take over the function of the switchboard in case the CallManager fails. In addition, Cisco Unity was installed on the existing mail server. Cisco Unity is a unified messaging system that allows users to manage e-mail, voicemail and faxes from any appliance (IP telephone, mobile phone, PC) and any location.

In addition, Auxifina is using the Cisco IP Integrated Contact Distribution (IP-ICD), a software module for optimising communications at their call centre. IP-ICD includes integrated Interactive Voice Response functions (IVR), which allow calls to be answered automatically and information to be collected to connect the caller to the right staff member. Staff at the call centre also received a small software application for their PCs, allowing them to make calls with a mouse click.

Internal management and maintenance

With IP telephony you can keep the management and maintenance in-house, even for the call centre. "The configuration takes place through a user-friendly web interface. We can extend and modify this system ourselves according to our requirements. A while ago, we moved a department from the ground floor to the fourth floor. I myself moved the telephones and plugged the cables into the sockets in the new offices. With this, the matter was settled. With traditional telephony this would have been unimaginable and you would have had to call in external engineers. Moreover, we now need just one connection for the telephone and PC. Thanks to the internal switch of the IP telephones, the PCs can be linked to the company network via these sets.

Scenarios direct the telephone traffic

Thanks to Cisco IP-ICD, Auxifina can now also guarantee its partners and clients a reliable telephone service. The underlying intelligent management system allows you to generate extensive reports and statistics. These tell you when it is busy for instance and when the reoccurring peak times are. Now Auxifina can, if necessary, put in more staff or adjust the hours that services are available.

Michel Morrier: "IP-ICD allows you to send telephone traffic faultlessly through different scenarios that we can set up ourselves. Currently, we have two main scenarios – the first leads to the reception, the other to the call centre. Both scenarios discriminate between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking callers. The scenario for the call centre transfers the calls according to the type of product that the client needs information on. Moreover, we can easily expand or modify the system, for new products for example. We are also thinking about offering more services through the centre in the future. In that case we'll be able to create new scenarios easily."

The future plans actually go further than the new scenarios for the call centre. Auxifina is also considering equipping its other offices with IP telephony in the future and making calls through the long-distance network between the offices. The current CallManager would then serve all seven Belgian offices, so making calls within the company free. Michel Morrier: "At the moment we are working on a pilot project to test the transfer of speech over the frame relay connection between our head office and one of our branches. In principle, it should succeed as we already have the right routers and switches.

Users swap applications

With IP telephony, moreover, people can exchange applications to integrate data and speech and to make things convenient and efficient for the end-user. "We are also testing an application that connects the telephony system with the data files on our servers. So a client who calls can then enter a contract number through the telephone. The ICD system has to forward that number together with the call to the right person at the call centre, so that he can quickly consult the relevant information on his PC," explains Michel Morrier.

François Bruwier, account manager at INS, adds: "With regards to the applications, the users of Cisco IP telephony make up a genuine family. Both INS itself and the clients regularly develop new functions, such as for instance the possibility of integrating a personal list of contact from Microsoft Outlook into the telephone. We keep each other informed about these developments. It's one of the big advantages of IP telephony – the applications will perhaps only come to an end when the imagination of our clients is exhausted."





One coherent network for all communications

Auxifina's network did not have to be modified before the new telephony system was implemented. In 2000, Auxifina and INS started with the gradual conversion of its previous Token Ring network to Ethernet. Meanwhile, the company network is almost completely made up of Cisco equipment. Also, for example, the highly protected link to the national bank and the intranet. Coherence is one important reason why Auxifina only considered IP telephony from Cisco. We have developed the network with a well thought-out approach, step by step, according to our needs. Also, by consistently choosing Cisco for our telephony, we now have a very well-organised architecture that we can manage ourselves and build on in the future. If for instance we ever construct a wireless network in our office, then thanks to our

present architecture we can straightaway use wireless computers and wireless telephones. After all, data and speech travel through the same network. If we had nevertheless opted for a different supplier or technology, then it would always have been the odd one out. Because we had already worked with Cisco products – such as switches with inline power that also provide the IP telephone sets with electric power – we had a good basic framework for an innovative but stable technology such as IP telephony. Besides, it is a system that can be excellently integrated, not only at the level of data and speech but also with other systems and ICT applications. The transparency of the whole is very convenient.”



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