

Eli Lilly

Gradual changeover to Cisco IP telephony opens up prospects for integration



“THE TELEPHONES ARE EASY TO INSTALL AND RELOCATE. THE SYSTEM IS VERY FLEXIBLE, A BIG PLUS FOR A SITE CONSISTING OF FIVE BUILDINGS WHERE STAFF MEMBERS MOVE AROUND REGULARLY. WITH OUR TRADITIONAL SWITCHBOARD WE ALWAYS HAD TO SUPPORT IT WORKING WITH A PARTNER AND THAT CLEARLY WORKS OUT MORE EXPENSIVE.”

Alain Lacourt, Team Leader IT Infrastructure at Lilly Services

Eli Lilly is an innovative pharmaceuticals company that is represented worldwide, not only through numerous administrative branches and production facilities but also via research laboratories in nine countries. Lilly is continually striving for the development of remedies for major medical problems that moreover put pressure on health service costs. For this, the company uses advanced research techniques and collaborates closely with scientific organisations and hospitals in more than 60 countries. Worldwide Lilly has over 41 000 employees that supply medicines to 158 countries. In Belgium, Lilly has a 400-strong workforce and branches in Brussels and Mont-Saint-Guibert, where one of the four European research centres is also established.

Need for extra capacity

When the traditional switchboard in Mont-Saint-Guibert had reached the limits of its capacity, Lilly Belgium did not acquire a second PABX. The company installed an IP telephony installation and integrated it with the existing traditional system. “An investment in telephony is a long-term investment. Telephony through the computer network is a technological evolution with promising prospects. We made the move with an eye to the future. Moreover, first we just needed extra capacity. Our traditional switchboard could still keep going for a bit longer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Eli Lilly is an innovative pharmaceuticals company that is represented worldwide and has research laboratories in nine countries. In fact, Lilly strives for the development of remedies for major medical problems and collaborates closely with scientific organisations and hospitals in more than 60 countries. In Belgium, Lilly has a 400-strong workforce, with branches in Brussels and Mont-Saint-Guibert, where one of the four European research centres is also established.

Challenge

When the traditional switchboard in Mont-Saint-Guibert had reached the limits of its capacity, Lilly Belgium considered several possibilities. On the one hand, the company wanted to invest in a future-oriented system in the long-term. On the other hand, the traditional system could keep going a bit longer and people wanted to limit the possible risks associated with a new technology.

Solution

Lilly installed a Cisco IP telephony system and integrated it with the traditional switchboard. The new installation is based on two redundant Cisco CallManagers and in the first phase it served 40 Cisco IP telephones. After an upgrade in the network, more telephones are now gradually being introduced. Cisco's IPCC Express call centre software will also probably be installed at the end of 2003.

Results

Lilly has a future-oriented, homogenous infrastructure for the transport of data and speech, which is also easy to manage. Its own IT department is responsible for maintaining and supporting the IP telephony system. Meanwhile, three of Lilly's foreign branches also call through their computer network with Cisco infrastructure. One of them also uses Cisco's IPCC Express call centre software. Moreover, Lilly is looking into the possibilities of setting up telephone connections over the long-distance network, wireless calls with IP telephones and of working from home.

So we were able to introduce the new telephony system gradually and explore it further without running big risks,” explains Alain Lacourt, who is in charge of the IT infrastructure at Eli Lilly, about the choice.

In 2002 Lilly installed two redundant Cisco IP switchboards – the so-called CallManagers – and about 40 Cisco IP telephones. The CallManagers are in different rooms because of safety considerations. For the smooth transport

of speech packets, two Cisco Catalyst 4500 switches were added to the network in this first phase. At the beginning of 2003 there followed an upgrade in the rest of the infrastructure, which means that the priority given to speech transport is guaranteed throughout. In the course of the year 60 extra telephones are being connected and Cisco's IPCC Express call centre software will probably also be installed. Moreover, Lilly is also considering the possibility of setting up telephone connections over the long-distance network between the different sites and wireless telephony with Cisco IP telephones.

Integration with traditional telephony

"The integration with the traditional system was not really simple, especially when it came to the applications. That's why we first changed the IT department over to the new system. Then we introduced it to colleagues in other departments, depending on their needs and interests. The IP telephones are useful to colleagues who set up lots of teleconferences because they make things very simple. The system is also popular with staff members who move around a lot within the company because it means they can take their calls anywhere. All they need to do is log onto a set and then the calls for their extension come through directly. Currently, for end-users mobility equates with the greatest of ease," says Alain Lacourt.

For Alain Lacourt the most important advantages of IP telephony lie in the areas of management and maintenance. Because the telephony runs through the computer network, its own IT department can carry out a great many of the tasks itself.

"The telephones are simple to install and relocate. The system is very flexible, a big plus for a site with five buildings where staff members move around regularly. With our traditional switchboard we always had to support it working with a partner and that works out more expensive," he acknowledges.



Simple management thanks to standardisation

Lilly chose Cisco IP telephony mainly with an eye to a homogenous infrastructure and the smooth integration of data and speech. Cisco is after all Lilly's standard network supplier for local and long-distance networks. Lilly's present network consists entirely of Cisco routers and switches. "On the one hand, Cisco supplies quality products and on the other a uniform infrastructure greatly simplifies the management and integration of systems. As a pioneer of converged networks, moreover, Cisco guarantees the flexible joint running of data and speech transport. We also chose Cisco for our wireless network. The Aironet material is not only easy to integrate, but it also gives excellent performance and provides good security. So we are also curious about the wireless IP telephone that was recently launched, as at the moment we use a DECT system," says Alain Lacourt.

Recommended for new branches

Now that Lilly's network in Mont-Saint-Guibert is ready for speech transport, in the future there will be further changeovers to IP telephony as new needs and requirements crop up. Also, any new branches and buildings will from now on be connected straightaway to the IP switchboard. "IP telephony is very user-friendly and easy to install when you can start from scratch. This is quicker than an integration with traditional telephony," says Alain Lacourt. Meanwhile, we also have a sites in Paris, Copenhagen and in the United Kingdom, which telephone via the computer network. Because we were the first branch to use it, we could share our experiences with them. The installation at those three sites ran smoothly, also because in each case they started from scratch with a new network in a new building. In such circumstances we can certainly recommend IP telephony."

Also for the call centre

Moreover, the colleagues in Paris use Cisco's IPCC Express call centre software. Lilly Mont-Saint-Guibert will most probably follow their example and use their experience, as the Brussels call centre will move to Mont-Saint-Guibert by the end of 2003. "The new call centre software will be used by our internal helpdesk and by the group that supports clinical trials. Our IT helpdesk also picks up customers' questions, for Belgium as well as for six other locations in Europe. In total, it deals with some 1200 customers who make between 2000 and 2500 calls each month," according to Alain Lacourt.





Now that Lilly uses IP telephony at various locations, it might also be useful for directing speech transport over the WAN. The company could probably save on telephone costs in this way. "There are studies investigating whether this option would be cost-effective already," says Alain Lacourt. "But our WAN is not yet ready for it. We would have to invest in extra bandwidth, so for the present we are waiting for the results of the research. An expansion in the long-distance network would not only mean cost savings, but also again a simplification of the management. The CallManager can after all support a large number of sets at various locations, so we could connect several sites, such as Mont-Saint-Guibert and Brussels for example, to one switchboard.

Moreover, there are more and more colleagues who are working from home. So we are also testing the Cisco IP SoftPhone, a software telephone that allows personnel to work from home as if they were in the office, provided they have a good connection with the company network. The possibilities are far from exhausted."



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