CISCO SYSTEMS

PARTS FOR TRUCKS KEEPS ON TRUCKING WITH WIRELESS IP COMMUNICATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER

- Atlantic Canada's largest distributor of heavy duty truck and trailer parts
- Operates facility to re-manufacture brake shoes, differentials, transmissions, power steering and drivelines
- Service centres include 48 service bays and 68 technicians
- 230 employees and 14 locations throughout four Atlantic provinces
- Established in 1919 and family owned

INDUSTRY

- Wholesale distribution, Service

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Very competitive market where customer service is the differentiator
- Existing telephony system reduced the quality of service to customers and was no longer supported by vendor or reseller
- Different telephone systems made managing the company's telephony complex and costly

NETWORK SOLUTION

- The Cisco IP Communications system when fully deployed will be centrally managed and standardized at all Parts For Trucks' locations

BUSINESS VALUE

- Improved customer service through four digit direct dialing
- Wireless hands free environment improves productivity
- Centralized IP telephony improves operational efficiency, and management
- Converged voice, video and data network reduces administrative costs

Parts For Trucks has adopted a wireless Cisco IP Communications Solution to better its customer service, a key differentiator in its competitive market. With 14 locations across Atlantic Canada, the centralized solution reduces administrative costs, boosts staff productivity and operational efficiencies and, most importantly, helps the company improve customer experience.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

As the largest distributor of heavy-duty truck and trailer parts in Atlantic Canada, Parts For Trucks is the leader in a very competitive market where customer service is the differentiator. "The reason our customers buy from us is not because we have a product the competitor doesn't have and not because there's a price difference," explains Andy Raymond, vice-president and co-owner. "They buy from us because they feel they are well served when they call us."

An essential aspect of that service is providing an immediate response to customers who phone the company for service or advice. However, the company's previous telephone equipment was unreliable - calls were sometimes missed or connections were sometimes lost.

Many of the branches are staffed with three to five employees who have many duties. As they are in a warehouse environment, they may be unloading a truck at the back or checking inventory in the stock room when the phone rings. In the larger facilities, staff may be in service bays.

"Our staff is in motion all the time, putting stock away in the bins and talking to the walk-in trade," says Raymond. "With the exception of one location, we don't have order desk staff who man the phones."

Legacy cordless phones were used in some of the larger stores to give staff some freedom from having to stand at the parts counter. However, an access point was required for every two phones so staff members walking around while talking on the phone would often lose their connection. Also, the inability to attach the bulky handsets to their belts discouraged employees from carrying them at all times.

Parts For Trucks also faced cost and inconvenience issues because of having different telephone systems across 14 locations. The company had found benefit in centralizing other administrative functions and was ready to do so with its telephony network. A single telephony system throughout the organization would facilitate its aim to run its operation more like a single, large warehouse throughout Atlantic Canada, minimizing the physical and departmental differences from one warehouse to another.

"Because we're in a geographically diverse area but relatively sparsely populated compared to other places in North America, we have some stores with very few people and can't justify a lot of overhead in those locations," Raymond adds. "We want people in those stores to concentrate on selling truck parts and not burden them with more administration. Having one phone system where we can access those stores quickly and they can access support from head office or knowledgeable staff at other locations is very important to us and we didn't have that before."

Parts For Trucks had upgraded from a frame relay low bandwidth to a dedicated DSL with Cisco routers. That set the stage to take advantage of converging voice and data.

"The wireless solution has been a huge benefit to customer service. Wireless is a very powerful tool for the way we serve our customers."

--Andy Raymond, Vice-President and Co-owner, Parts For Trucks.

NETWORK SOLUTION

Working with the wireless and networking services division at Hewlett-Packard (HP) as the Cisco partner, Parts For Trucks did a pilot test of a Cisco IP Communications system and decided to go the distance with it.

"Cisco had the best product line, was better positioned for what we wanted to do and had a better offering than the other companies we looked at," says Darryl Batchilder, IT manager. "The great team we were dealing with at HP were a big factor in the decision as well. They were able to provide the knowledge, leadership and confidence to make it successful."

The Dartmouth headquarters was the first location to have its telephony replaced with IP Telephony throughout. The Cisco solution included a Plantronics wireless headset with a convenient wearable holster. HP set up centralized call routing in the main office and went live at two branches. Management soon decided to extend the Cisco wireless functionality to all its locations, making the Dartmouth facility the centralized call distribution site.

The full company-wide roll out of the Cisco IP Communications system is currently underway with two Cisco CallManager systems, Cisco Unity Unified Messaging, Cisco Aironet 1200 Series wireless access points, Cisco ISR routers and Cisco PIX 515 firewalls, Cisco 2800 Series routers, Cisco Secure Access Control Server (ACS) for authentication, and CiscoWorks Wireless LAN Solution Engine (WLSE).

"The ongoing collaboration between HP, Cisco and Parts For Trucks made the difference in terms of this project's success," said David Power, account manager at Hewlett-Packard. "Onsite service and dedication from the integrated team was essential in growing this initiative out of the pilot phase and into a successful solution that continuously meets Parts for Truck's evolving needs."

BUSINESS VALUE

Making calls over the Internet saves long distance fees between the geographically dispersed offices, but the functionality that boosts customer service and productivity matters more to Parts for Trucks.

"Parts For Trucks' ability to use IP Telephony to get rid of most of the recurring costs they see from their service provider was important, but it wasn't as important as deploying a solution that was very productive to the end user and enhanced service to customers," confirms Power. "What they wanted to see was the difference when a customer called in."

- **Improved customer service:** Transferring customer calls and accessing staff at various locations is easier so help is more readily available. " Previously, staff and customers would make calls and invariably the person they are looking for is not the person answering the phone. Now they are a four-digit code away from expert help," Raymond explains.

  And, there are no more lost calls.

  The new wireless phones are conveniently small and are worn in a holster. Even if employees are jumping into a forklift, they can respond to calls.

  The phone is answered more quickly and the person answering the phone can carry on the conversation into the parts bin to measure or check something in particular for a customer.

  The IP Telephony wireless range extends beyond the facilities' perimeters, so if a person is on a call and goes to a storage facility across the parking lot, the connection is maintained throughout the call.

  "The wireless solution has been a huge benefit to customer service," Raymond reports. "Wireless is a very powerful tool for the way we serve our customers."

- **Time-saving productivity and operational efficiency boosts:** "Cisco IP Communications is allowing people to work more efficiently and access the phone more easily," says Raymond. "I can press a four-digit code and go right to someone's wireless phone at another location. I can dial from my PC. All those things save time."

  Each office is outfitted with the same feature sets within the centralized Cisco CallManager enterprise solution, making remote management of the phone system easier than before.

- **Cost savings:** With training from HP, Parts For Trucks can implement the remaining roll-out of the new centralized system itself. Instead of paying monthly Centrex costs for voicemail, moves, adds and changes (MACs) and other services, the company can manage those responsibilities internally.

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NEXT STEPS

Using a Cisco IP Contact Center (IPCC) with skills-based call routing can ensure a hydraulic specialist, whether he is in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, PEI, or New Brunswick, gets the call.

The company could also create visibility into its inventory system through its network and telephony system, tracking and monitoring each inventory item across 14 locations. A service representative in Moncton can find the appropriate part in Halifax within seconds.

Also under consideration is the deployment of Cisco IP Communicator for mobile sales reps travelling around Atlantic Canada. The software-based application enables laptops or home office PCs to be used for unified messaging of voicemail and email, ensuring that sales representatives are connected anytime, anywhere.

However Parts For Trucks chooses to grow its business or change its operations model, the company is confident its Cisco IPC infrastructure will keep it rolling along.

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To find out more about Cisco Wireless Solutions, go to: www.cisco.com/go/wireless.

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