The voice of Justice speaks – with IP telephony

Executive Summary

Customer Name

- The Ministry of Justice, Finland

Industry

- Public sector – Central government

Business Challenge

- Provide the Helsinki Courthouse with a cost-effective, flexible and scalable platform for converged voice, video and data applications

Solution

- Cisco IP telephony solution, including Cisco CallManager call processing software and Cisco IP Phones

Business Results

- Infrastructure cost savings, with lower call charges and running costs
- Integration of fixed and mobile telephone services provides more flexible support to employees, wherever they are working
- The same Cisco platform can be used to introduce new applications, such as video conferencing and remote collaboration, which will improve productivity in a geographically distributed organisation
- Services such as video conferencing will be extended to the public, to improve efficiency and offer citizens greater choice

When the Finnish Ministry of Justice introduced a programme to implement IP telephony nationwide, it started with the Helsinki Courthouse, the historic home of the Helsinki District Court. Cisco-based IP telephony services running on a converged IP network and operated by Elisa, a major Finnish telecommunications company, have generated huge cost savings and provided a platform for more flexible internal communications and enhanced citizen services.

Business Challenge

The Helsinki Courthouse is administered by Finland's Ministry of Justice which runs the country's courts, prosecutors, legal aid offices, Prison Service and Probation Service. Its administration also covers the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman and the National Research Institute of Legal Policy.

When the Ministry of Justice embarked on a programme to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness throughout its many agencies and locations, it decided to move from traditional telephone systems to IP telephony nationwide. This coincided with the relocation of the Helsinki Courthouse to the former headquarters of Finnish Alcohol Company, Alko, which was renovated in 2004 to become one of the most modern office buildings in the Nordic region. The renovation plan included amalgamating fixed and mobile communications into a Voice over IP (VoIP) network, thereby consigning separate telephone cabling to history.

The Helsinki Courthouse, also known as Salmisaari House, is not the only site to benefit from innovations in communications technology. By the end of 2006, all the locations of the Ministry of Justice in Finland are expected to have implemented IP telephony solutions.

Solution

Salmisaari House is part of a larger contract awarded by the Ministry of Justice to Elisa Oyj (Elisa), a leading Finnish telecommunications provider.

The solution adopted by the Helsinki Courthouse is based on a converged IP infrastructure capable of carrying both voice and data traffic. Elisa is responsible for building, operating and managing the voice solutions and services, using networking equipment, call processing software and IP phones from Cisco Systems.

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Antero Nuotto
Administrative Manager
Helsinki District Court

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>
> Antero Nuotto
> Administrative Manager
> Helsinki District Court

Antero Nuotto, Administrative Manager to the Helsinki District Court, says: "Both ease of use and cost efficiency have been key factors for the Ministry of Justice, which ordered the services, and for the Helsinki District Court, which uses them in Salmisaari House." He adds: "It was also essential to have a smooth switchover to the new service, which is what happened. We needed an uninterrupted service so that citizens could continue to attend to their affairs quickly and easily, even though we were making substantial changes to our systems."

Business Results

Salmisaari House is the largest office building in Finland to run its communications exclusively over a converged IP voice and data network. Since no separate telephone infrastructure was required, the cost of renovating Salmisaari House was significantly reduced. With one infrastructure instead of two, ongoing maintenance and management costs are also much lower. In addition, IP telephony is inherently less expensive than traditional, proprietary telephone systems because it is standards-based and scalable.

Another major cost saving is on inter-departmental call charges: there are none. With voice transferred to the data network, calls between offices located in different parts of the country are free. This played an important part in the Ministry of Justice's decision to adopt VoIP nationwide.

Voice functionality is also much improved. With fixed and mobile phone services on the same system, for example, the same services are now available to both mobile and fixed phone users. The flexibility of the Cisco-based IP telephony solution means that it is much easier and more cost effective to add new services and users to the network. For example, mobile office functionality can be introduced to support employees whose work involves travelling or visiting different locations. Similarly, contact centre capabilities can be integrated onto the same infrastructure, providing a cost-effective platform on which to enhance the Courthouse's responsiveness to citizens.

IP telephony also enhances employee collaboration and helps to make video conferences more effective, as Kari Sutinen, Elisa's Account Manager for the Ministry of Justice, explains: "On the VoIP infrastructure we can build applications for new services, such as online collaboration, which improve productivity. For example, simultaneous editing and saving of documents can be done as part of audio and video conference calls."

This is particularly important in an organisation that is distributed over a wide area. IP telephony is already helping to transform the Ministry of Justice into a more agile and flexible operation. Kari Sutinen adds: "The new applications can reach people immediately, no matter where they are working – at the office or on the road from a mobile phone, PDA or laptop. Our goal is to give all employees device-independent access to network services."

In the future, the Ministry of Justice plans to extend its IP telephony services significantly. For example, applications such as IP video conferencing will become commonplace, and remote-access services for citizens will offer the Finnish people greater flexibility and choice in how they communicate with their government.

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Technology Blueprint

The Cisco Systems IP telephony solution in the Helsinki Courthouse covers 632 extensions and is based on Cisco CallManager call processing software. Cisco CallManager delivers a wide range of enterprise telephony features to packet devices such as IP phones. It can be deployed in two ways: either on a dedicated server at each location or in a cluster that is centralised in one or more larger sites. The flexibility of the system makes it possible for business and public sector organisations to select the most suitable locations from an operational and financial perspective.

Cisco IP phones work from the same LAN connections as PCs, which means that each work station – computer and/or IP phone – needs only one cable, reducing installation and maintenance costs. Relocating the phone is also very simple: it can be plugged into another socket anywhere on the network, which immediately identifies the user’s name and extension number and provides access to all relevant services such as voicemail.

The Helsinki Courthouse uses Cisco 7912 IP Phones for standard use and Cisco 7960 IP Phones when additional features or a bigger screen are needed.

At its service centres, Elisa provides managed call processing and switching services, together with connections to the public switched telephone network (PSTN). The company is now building a nationwide IP telephony system based on Cisco technology, using the existing trunk network at the Ministry of Justice.

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