

Cisco Secure Network Foundation: An Open-and-Shut Case for Supporting Business Expansion at Jenkins Law Firm

Executive Summary

Customer Name

- Jenkins Law Firm

Industry

- Legal

Business Challenge

- Small law firm needs a technology solution to manage communications of busy attorneys and support staff.

Network Solution

- A Cisco switched LAN backbone consisting of the following products provides the firm with access to a Microsoft Small Business Server, Internet capabilities, and network based e-mail:
 - Cisco Catalyst® Switch
 - Cisco PIX® 501 Security Appliance
 - Cisco 800 Series integrated services router

Business Results

- Jenkins Law Firm's secure network foundation transformed communications and dramatically reduced duplication of efforts, resulting in off-the-chart increases in productivity and employee satisfaction.

The Jenkins Law Firm, PLLC, is located at the center of Crawford County in the heart of northwest Arkansas. With just four attorneys, a support staff of six, and one small satellite office, it strives to be a full-service firm offering legal counsel in all areas including employment, business and corporate, personal injury, real estate, and family matters.

Dan Jenkins, attorney and owner of Jenkins Law, found that the firm's business processes were getting chaotic, and without an integrated networking solution the legal staff found themselves doing multiple steps redundantly to ensure that the latest version of client paperwork was up to date. "We literally walked disks around," he recalls. The firm needed a network that gave access to all users and would allow better management of communications between attorneys and support staff. As the firm was preparing to move into a brand new building, the timing seemed right to invest in a network foundation that could expand and adapt to their communication requirements.

Jenkins was familiar with Solid Networks, a Cisco® Premier Certified Partner, through work it had done for other companies. Along with its Cisco specializations in IP and Switching, California-based Solid Networks is also a member of the Cisco Small and Medium-Sized Business (SMB) Select Partner program.

Philip Alfrey, director of business development for Solid Networks, understands the special needs of small businesses. "SMB-sized customers have a faster technical lifecycle," he says. "While large enterprise customers will adopt a solution and migrate to it slowly, smaller firms don't have that luxury. They have hard budget numbers, and don't invest money just to buy new technology—they buy technology based on business needs and what they can get out of it." Alfrey says education is also important to the small business. "While larger firms may have an IT staff that directs the company's technology decisions, SMBs are looking for expertise and guidance."

Jenkins agrees. "I'm a good lawyer, but I don't know much about technology," he says. "And as a lawyer, I know some lawyers just fill out forms, and others ask lots of questions. I like to ask questions and that's what I liked about Solid Networks. They asked the right questions—they wanted to understand our business and our business needs, and gain a clear understanding of our budget. Instead of trying to shove us into a certain box, they built a box around us."

A Flexible Plan

Solid Networks recommended both a complete integrated networking component and a services component. A Cisco switched backbone would give all users access to a Microsoft Small Business Server and devices such as printers. All users would have Internet capabilities and network-based e-mail instead of individual accounts. A VPN would provide a secure connection to the satellite office. For network management, Solid Networks would set up a remote auditing and alert service in its California headquarters.

Small Business Technology Planning Provides a Secure Network Future

As Alfrey's SMB experience told him, Jenkins Law Firm had the plan respected the hard budget numbers Jenkins' firm had in mind. "But I also appreciate how they designed flexibility into our network solution so that so we could make improvements and expansions down the road," says Jenkins. For example, when Solid Networks designed and set up the network solution, the firm had two attorneys, but within a year it had four

attorneys and additional support staff. Jenkins had been provided a technology roadmap that allowed him to plan for investing in additional equipment as the company grew.

Alfrey says this kind of flexibility starts with that technology roadmap. “We partner tightly with vendors so we know where the technology is going,” he says. “Then we match that technology with the customer’s growth, business applications, and financial cycle. We don’t want to provide just one kind of solution that fits a customer’s needs today—we show them what their technology can do for them as they grow and invest in new applications. We also show them that investing in some of the integrated routing functionalities now makes a lot sense and saves money long term, rather than doing a ‘forklift upgrade’ of components in a few years.”

The entire Jenkins Law Firm network solution was built at the Solid Network offices in Modesto, California, working from the contractor’s blueprints for the new building and dealing directly with the person handling its wiring. The completed network was shipped ready to plug in. Solid Networks did not have to send out engineers or hire people locally to deploy the network, which saved the customer money. “We plugged it in, and it worked,” says Jenkins. “And they took care of things like making sure our particular software for the legal community worked on the network. The software we use isn’t designed for the general networking world. Solid Networks took care of all those details and made sure the whole thing would work when we received it. As far as I know, they never even left California!”

Solid Networks is also handling the service side of the solution. By remotely auditing the Jenkins Law Firm network, Solid Networks is alerted of any potential issues or problems and handles them proactively. Jenkins recalls a time when Solid Networks sent someone out to their offices to fix something on the network, and no one at the law firm even knew there was a problem.

“The fact that they’re in California and we’re in Arkansas has made no difference,” says Jenkins. “In fact we get better service from them than we’ve gotten locally.”

Cisco Secure Network Foundation Passes the Bar for Increasing Small-Business Productivity and Communications

With its new network performing flawlessly from the day they plugged it in, Jenkins Law Firm employees can easily access files whether they’re working at the office, from home, or at a client’s office. The days of the Nike network are over and no one is walking computer disks down the hall or finding out that a client’s paperwork has been prepared twice.

“We’re a small law firm, but we work with and compete every day with firms of 500 lawyers,” says Jenkins. “It’s critical to me and my clients that I look as capable and am as productive as these big firms. With a Secure Network Foundation from Cisco, I have a network foundation that enables me to compete with big guys.”—Dan Jenkins, attorney and owner of Jenkins Law Firm

“Now when I’m preparing something for a client, such as a contract, I know exactly what version I’m working on and what needs done with it,” says Jenkins. “And being oblivious to the technology is a benefit to me. I don’t want to understand the computer; I just want it to work so I can do my job. The extent of our IT department is me calling Solid Networks, and they take care of the rest.”

The deployment for Jenkins Law Firm is a perfect fit to the philosophy of Alfrey and the Solid Networks staff.

“We like taking that enterprise level capability, and delivering it to a company the size of Jenkins Law Firm,” says Alfrey. “All the features and functionality that a large company has are wanted and needed by smaller businesses: standardization across multiple users, fax and remote access, securing different individuals for network access. But these capabilities aren’t typically available to small businesses. With Cisco Secure Network Foundation solutions, we deliver true technology convergence scaled to small business size.”

This is important to Jenkins and the success of his business.

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This customer story is based on information provided by Jenkins Law Firm and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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