

Cisco enables UK house builder to transform communications for construction site staff and sales offices



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CUSTOMER NAME • CALA Group Limited
INDUSTRY • Property Developer
BUSINESS SIZE • Mid-market
BUSINESS CHALLENGE • Delivering and maintaining communications to construction sites had become 'horrific' • Delivering data and voice to construction sites was complex • Sales and Marketing operations under threat from telephone line re-connection delays
NETWORK SOLUTION • Cisco Unified Communications
BUSINESS VALUE • Saves up to £2,500 on communication costs to and from each construction site • Cuts weeks off the time taken to relocate offices within a construction site • Transforms communications to and from sales and construction site offices • Provides a platform for delivering additional security and marketing services for new developments

CALA Group, a UK property developer, has used Cisco Unified Communications technology to transform the way staff on construction sites communicate internally and externally as well as saving up to £2,500 in communication costs to each site.

Improving construction site communications

CALA Group Limited is one of the UK's leading privately-owned residential and commercial property developers. The company is headquartered in Edinburgh and has offices in Aberdeen, Falkirk, Birmingham, Leeds and Staines. CALA has three main businesses: CALA Homes, CALA Properties and CALA Finance. CALA Homes offers a wide product range in desirable locations including detached houses, townhouses conversions and apartments. CALA Finance Ltd provides 100% funding to small and medium-sized house builders together with professional support and advice on residential development. CALA Properties Ltd manages, develops and invests in commercial property. The company has an annual turnover of approximately £225 million, 350 full-time staff and additional temporary contract staff.

At any one time, CALA Homes has around 30 construction sites across the UK and each site has two temporary offices; one for construction and one for sales and marketing. The previous communication networks at

each site would consist of a broadband data connection and separate telephone and fax lines for each office. But these offices have to move around the site as development progresses. The sales office, for example, may start off in a portable cabin, but then move into a showhome. Alan Donoghue, Group IT Director for CALA, says, "Moving a site office was an absolutely horrific experience, because getting the broadband connection service provider to move the existing connections took a long time, it caused outages anywhere between a week and a month."

This was having an impact on CALA's business because having broadband connection down for even a day would severely limit the marketing and selling operation as basic communications like email would be out of action.

An upgrade to CALA's corporate network, prompted the company to review how it deployed communications to its construction sites and CALA looked at how it could leverage investment in the network to improve communications to the sites.



Cisco: extremely reliable technology

CALA has introduced a Cisco Unified Communications network incorporating LANs (Local Area Networks) at its permanent offices and a WAN (Wide Area Network) linking them. The converged network supports both data and voice for these offices and includes 220 Cisco Unified IP handsets and Cisco Unity for Unified Messaging.

For construction site communications, CALA has developed a new system at its Briery Meadow development in Haddington, in East Lothian, St Bernard's Lawns in Solihull and the Campus in Aberdeen. This comprises a single broadband connection onto the site connected to a custom-



designed unit which provides Cisco wireless connectivity for the whole location. Both the construction and sales offices use the Cisco wireless connectivity for data and voice communications. Construction managers also have Cisco Unified wireless handsets which allow them to move around the site and still make and receive calls as if sitting at a desk. CALA is also testing IP CCTV over the Cisco wireless network for improved security on site.

CALA has been using Cisco technology within its foundation network for several years. Nevertheless, in selecting its communications solution, CALA looked at a number of options, but finally decided on Cisco. Donoghue says, "We already had Cisco for the core network so the feeling was that the telephone solution would integrate well together and we were also generally impressed with the Cisco product line. Cisco is a well set

up organisation with good equipment and technology and it is extremely reliable. I can't think of anything that has gone wrong."

Donoghue adds that during a visit to Cisco he got a sense of the scale of the Cisco organisation, the quality and an insight into the thinking and direction.

The Cisco Unified Communications solution at CALA was implemented by Instalec Networking, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner.

Cisco saves £2,500 plus per construction site

The Cisco technology has helped to improve communications generally across the whole organisation. Anyone on the network only needs to use an extension number to contact someone else, even if they are using a wireless handset out on a construction site.

For CALA's construction sites, Cisco technology is having a transformative effect. It is enabling CALA to make some significant financial savings. Donoghue estimates that CALA will save £2,500 for each construction site as a result of deploying the Cisco-based site communications system.

Lorraine Paterson, CALA Sales Advisor at the Briery Meadow development, says about the new communications facility, "The continuity of communication when moving from site sales cabin into a showhome is excellent, and it's something that is extremely important to my job. We've had none of the hassle usually associated with moving and reconnecting telephone lines which can sometimes take 20 days. Also, although they are basic things, being able to see who is calling, directories and messaging on the Cisco handsets are great features."

Paterson says that having IP CCTV at a development could also help sales by enabling potential house buyers to view the location instead of having to visit the development lots of times.

The Cisco technology is also helping CALA remove all the headaches associated with setting up and then moving multiple communication lines for its constructions sites.

Donoghue says, "When we presented the new site communications model based on Cisco technology to CALA's Regional Managers, they said if it prevents or mitigates against loss of communication to site for the period when we're moving site offices then we will pay anything."

The Cisco connectivity also makes it easier for CALA to manage remote sites because IT staff can see what equipment and services are being used at each location if and when there are technical problems.

The Cisco solution also opens up further cost saving and productivity improvement opportunities. CALA is looking at using RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tagging on construction sites for high-value plant and white goods to prevent theft. The company's Health and Safety Manager is interested in using IP CCTV on site to monitor compliance with health and safety standards. Generally the Cisco technology could be used to increase the personal safety of employees based on site.



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Lorraine Paterson, Sales Advisor, CALA Homes



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