

## High School Builds Better Communications Among Faculty and Parents



Assumption High School depends on Cisco® Unified Communications to keep faculty and staff in closer touch with parents and colleagues.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### ASSUMPTION HIGH SCHOOL

- Industry: Education
- Location: Louisville, KY
- Number of Employees: 145 employees

#### CHALLENGE

- Improve communication between parents and faculty on and off campus

#### SOLUTION

- Cisco Unified Communications brings together all voice and data communications on a single, secure network that is easy to manage and use

#### RESULTS

- Allow phone moves, adds, and changes in minutes instead of days
- Provide feature-rich messaging, call transfer, and conferencing features for faculty and staff

### Challenge

Founded in 1955, Assumption High School enjoys a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence. Assumption is one of only 41 schools in the nation to receive the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award three times. The private Catholic school brings together almost 1000 young women, grades 9–12, on a beautiful campus in Louisville, Kentucky.

Maintaining close communication between parents and faculty is one of the keys to Assumption’s success. However, when the school’s aging private branch exchange (PBX) began to show its limitations, the school realized that its phone system could no longer keep up with today’s needs.

“We had outgrown our previous phone system and were unable to do basic tasks like transfer calls between departments,” says Joyce Koch, IT Director at Assumption High School.

Voicemail and messaging were beginning to suffer as well, because most calls would arrive at the school’s main office, where an administrative assistant would have to manually write down and deliver messages.

“Callers would leave a message for a teacher in the main office, and sometimes those little pink message papers would get lost,” says Koch. “If the message was urgent or irate, there would be no way for the recipient to hear the caller’s tone of voice.”

Changing or updating the phone system created challenges as well. Assumption is an expanding school, growing physically and in enrollment, and often had to modify or add phone extensions. A visit from a phone vendor could be expensive, and might take days.



“Every time we needed to make the smallest change, we had to call a company to send someone here,” says Koch. “If they didn’t set it up correctly, we would have to wait for them to come back. We needed a solution that would give us control over our phone system.”

## Results

Assumption considered solutions from several vendors, then chose the Cisco Unified Communications solution. Cisco Unified Communications lets the school bring together all of its voice and data communications on one platform that provides powerful messaging, conferencing, and call-handling tools.

The Cisco solution’s advanced messaging, Cisco Unity<sup>®</sup>, has quickly enabled faculty to be more responsive to parents and colleagues. Instead of sharing voice mailboxes, every instructor has his or her own phone extension, and can receive voice messages over the phone or on email. Cisco Unity works smoothly with Microsoft Outlook to deliver phone messages to teachers the moment they arrive.

“Cisco messaging features are so helpful when parents are trying to contact teachers,” says Koch. “We can choose which message to listen to first on our PCs, and click to repeat a portion of the message if the caller is speaking too quickly. If we receive an urgent call from a parent, we can forward that to the dean, and they can hear the complete message and the caller’s tone of voice.”

The Cisco Unified Communications solution is easy to manage, so bringing in a phone vendor for routine maintenance has become a thing of the past.

“Instead of calling an outside company, I’m the person who changes phone numbers, adds new employees, or adds phones to the system,” says Koch. “If someone needs to move or change an extension, they can ask me, and the change is done five minutes later.”

Staff can even make simple changes to the phone system on their own. If a phone extension needs to be moved, people can simply disconnect their phones and plug them in at the new location.

“We did not realize just how easy it would be to move our phones around,” says Koch. “The Cisco Unified Communications solution lets us quickly and easily move phones with employees without changing their extensions. If we are having a board meeting, the principal can bring her office phone into the boardroom and work from that location all day.”

The new solution has proven to be extremely reliable as well. Since installing the solution, the school has experienced only a brief outage.

“We have experienced a failure, and the device was replaced in less than a day,” says Koch. “We still remember having our system down for three days the last time that our old phone system malfunctioned.”

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**– Joyce Koch, IT Director, Assumption High School**

## Solution

Working closely with Cisco Certified Partner Boice.net, Assumption chose the Cisco solution that would deliver the flexible performance that it needed over the long term.

“We had previous experience with Cisco equipment, and we know that they stand behind their products,” says Koch. “We knew that Cisco would be around for a long time, so we wouldn’t have to worry about support five years down the road.”

Using Cisco Unified Communications Manager, Assumption has built a customized solution that makes its entire faculty and staff more accessible.

“Incoming calls ring on four phones in the main office, and anyone can answer the phone and take care of the caller’s needs,” says Koch.

Administrators can touch a few buttons on their Cisco Unified IP Phones or PC to transfer calls to a department or redirect the caller to voicemail. If a call comes in after school hours, they can park the call and page a faculty member who may be roaming around the campus. Administrators and staff can even forward phone calls to their cell phones if they need to leave campus, but are expecting an important call.

The Cisco Unified Communications solution also makes it easy for Assumption to collaborate with board members and other educators through ad hoc teleconferencing.

“Our school is sponsored by The Sisters of Mercy, and we need to keep connected,” says Koch. “When we’re having a board meeting, we often conference in people who can’t attend in person.”

With its scalable new phone system in place, Koch is confident that the school will be able to enjoy fast, reliable communication well into the future.

“Our experience with the Cisco solution has been very good, and I have no reason to believe the system won’t support our new needs.”

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