

BRENT BURNS: Thank you for joining the Cisco Education and Government Unified Communications Podcast Series. I'm your host, Brent Burns. Today, we're joined by Chris Barwick and Ken Bywaters. Chris, tell us a little bit about your background. How long have you been working with education?

CHRIS BARWICK: All right. I have been in the industry for about 16 years. I had an engineering background. I've been both a partner and have been at Cisco for about the last 10 years. I have been focused on public-sector customers, primarily education, for probably about the last 13 years.

BRENT BURNS: Well, I look forward to talking to you today about some of the impacts of unified communications in the classroom. What are the issues should we focus on?

CHRIS BARWICK: I think, primarily, things have changed, right? Students are very different. They're absolutely multitaskers. Unfortunately, the way that we teach to them really hasn't changed, and this is causing a big problem in the classroom. And so we've got to do different things to engage the students. Any technology that's implemented in the classroom is a good thing, because I think it's going to engage the students. I think one of the things that we see that's challenging is there's, in most situations, not an easy way to implement video in the classroom. You know you got to roll around TVs or, you know, I've got to get a videotape or something else. So that's not very easy to use. And most of the time, what I want from a video perspective is high quality, but I might only need two-to-four minute-long snippets of video. How do I actually play that in the classroom? And the other area that we see that's a huge challenge is collaboration. If I'm a history professor and I discovered this great way to have an impact with my students on this World War II stuff that we're studying, how do I share that with all my peers, and how do I make that content available across the school or the district or even the state or the country, and that's something that's a bigger challenge.

BRENT BURNS: So you mentioned video. There's a lot of video that's already deployed out there today. What's Cisco's solution in that space as it relates to education?

CHRIS BARWICK: Well, there's a couple of different areas. Digital Media Solutions, which is Cisco's video solution that touches the classroom, gives customers the ability to have a video portal for their district and make any content, whether it be an hour-long HD show or it could be a two-minute-long snippets on different things that have happened throughout history, or different things that'll augment curriculum, the fact that that can be easily accessed in the classroom from either a projector or from a TV, that's a huge difference for our faculty members. If they can take this video and use it in the classroom and it's incredibly easy to do, they don't have to worry about it. They're going to allow that to integrate more and more with their curriculum. The other area that we can help with is video telephony and video collaboration through MeetingPlace -- the ability to set up a meeting on MeetingPlace and have other peers join them across the district, and join through not only audio conferencing but web conferencing and/or video conferencing, and then record that content so that it can be accessed at a later date.

BRENT BURNS: The second area that you mentioned -- I've actually heard this from the school-district customers that I've talked with in the last few months -- is an area of increasing interest, and that's collaboration. Can you share with us some of what you're seeing in that area?

CHRIS BARWICK We're going to have an impact on education. There's people out there doing amazing things, but they've got to be able to share that, and not only with their peers at their schools, but outside of the school, outside of the district, really statewide and/or nationwide, and that's not easy to do today. To be able to collaborate through audio, web, and video at any time and make it as easy as just sending an Outlook invite to somebody, that's a big differentiator and that's kind of what Cisco's MeetingPlace brings to the table.

BRENT BURNS: As you know, Chris, as part of our Education and Government Podcast Series, we've also had conversations with other folks about public-safety issues. Is there a connection or a business case related to public safety as it applies to this solution?

CHRIS BARWICK You know, that's one of the other big challenges that are facing our districts, right? There's been many, many studies that have proven, if students don't feel safe, they're not going to function very well in a learning environment, and as a result, test scores are going to go down. So making students feel safe, and faculty and staff feel safe, is a big deal. And so, public safety is a huge piece of it. Obviously, an effective and functional paging system is a huge part of it. Also, with paging, used to be that paging was just audio. Well, the Berbee solution actually does graphical paging to the message or the phones, too.

BRENT BURNS: So, Chris, I know this isn't news to you: budgets are very difficult right now. In light of that, why fund a solution like we're talking about today versus some of the other things that have to be high priority for our education customers?

CHRIS BARWICK I think one of the things we've been very successful with is working with our customers to help them maximize the dollars that they already have available. So there's lots of alternative funding mechanisms. But more so than that is being smarter with the money that they have. A lot of customers are still wiring their schools for decades-old technology. So they're running co-ax cable for cable TV distribution. They're running separate cables for voice and data and for a paging solution. All that can now be delivered over the exact same cabling infrastructure. The cost savings alone by doing that will pay for a significant amount of the technology in the schools. Then the other nice thing about the Cisco solution is that our operating cost and maintenance cost tend to be significantly lower than a lot of other people in the industry.

BRENT BURNS: So who are some of the partners that work with Cisco to make all of this a reality for our customers?

CHRIS BARWICK: None of this happens without our partners. They are the ones that are really, really close to the customer. They are working with their Cisco counterparts. The partners need to know and understand education and be comfortable with that customer's care-about, what their business issues are. Then they need to have the capabilities to deploy the technologies that are crucial to these customers.

BRENT BURNS: For those interested in learning more about these solutions, where should they go for more information?

CHRIS BARWICK Probably one of the first places you can go to is, we've set up an education site on cisco.com. So, www.cisco.com/go/education. Easy to find, and it's a great place to start to gather a lot of information.

BRENT BURNS: Well thank you very much, Chris. We really appreciate your time today. Very insightful and informative, and I appreciate your perspective.

CHRIS BARWICK: Absolutely, thanks.

BRENT BURNS: Ken, tell us a little bit about your background. How long have you been working with education?

KEN BYWATERS: Well, I've been working with education for roughly 8 years. I started out with Berbee almost 13 years ago and also had some involvement in our network group, and that really kind of fell together in terms of putting the network and software development together, which had a great natural fit for schools.

BRENT BURNS: Some of our listeners may be unfamiliar with Berbee. Can you tell us about Berbee and the mission of the company?

KEN BYWATERS: Sure. Well, Berbee originally was a large Cisco reseller that also had a very strong software development arm. So we provide notification products of a lot of different flavors and work with Cisco to bring these products to market through Cisco partners.

BRENT BURNS: Great. So what can you tell us about the Berbee solution and how it has applicability for education?

KEN BYWATERS: Well, I tell you, it's interesting because the product started out as well, I guess you just call it simple paging. The U.S. Department of Commerce, on September 11th, could not evacuate their buildings. They have a large facility that was built in early 1930s, and it has no public-address system. So, on September 11th, when they were trying to evacuate the building, they had to walk up and down the hall and tell people to get out and to announce the evacuation plan manually. So, they were our first customer, and still use it today as their emergency notification system. And you might say, "Well, what does that have to do with education?" Well certainly, there are security concerns in K-12 and higher ed, but also, there's just generic notification needs. We had customers start to use our product not only as a way to notify all the schools in the district of a lock-down or even a routine message because in 2004, we introduced an IP speaker which turned out to be a revolutionary technology for them. What our system offers them is not a hardware-based solution, but a software-based solution installed at the district office, that can communicate to all schools in the district. They get the IP speakers from Cisco, plug them into a power data jack, they automatically get the right time and register with our software centrally. They have one system, software based, and it's as simple as install software, plug in speakers where you need them.

BRENT BURNS: Ken, in an unfortunate scenario where they had a -- maybe had a similar event that would take place, you mentioned that, on 9/11, they were walking down the halls. With the Berbee solution implemented and in place today, how would the situation be handled differently?

KEN BYWATERS: I was very surprised myself how frequent a lock-down is at school. This happens every day at our customer sites. So when they go into lock-down, you not only want to let everyone in that school know what's going on, and you also want to let people know at the other schools. So if the news gets out and parents call the principal at a neighboring school, the principal can give them the full update. So their policy is, "We'll send a lock-down message to the school where the event is happening, and do that with a special tone." When the teacher hears the lock-down tone, they can go to their phone, they can go to their PC and read about what's happening. The teacher can then follow their policy and be instructed what to do.

BRENT BURNS: I'd like to shift gears, if we can, Ken, and talk for just a minute about some of the architectural approaches to the solution if we are to go into an environment where an education institution has an existing Cisco Unified Communications solution. What would the process look like?

KEN BYWATERS: It's software-based, so the first thing they need to do is make sure that they have a network in place, obviously. If they already have Unified Communications, they have to get the software from Cisco. It's electronically

downloadable. They install it on the server, and then, wherever they want loudspeakers, they just determine the placement where they're going to want them, get the speaker from Cisco, and plug it in.

BRENT BURNS: Can you share what are some of the future capabilities or enhancements to this solution?

KEN BYWATERS: We actually work very closely with our existing customers. Every year, we bring them into a users' group meeting where we sit down in a locked room and say, "These are the things we're working on. What kind of things do you need?" And it's very interesting, because what's fallen out of that is a very strong physical security component. So our system certainly can be used as standalone paging bells and clocks, but we have people that are using it for much, much more than that, with things that are available right now. So for instance, if you have building controls, if you have motion detectors, door locks, or lights, we can integrate with all that and essentially attach notification to those things. So we see people doing this time and time again. They're integrating with building controls, RFID tags, video surveillance, all kinds of things that you can do with this product, and I see that as the way of the future.

BRENT BURNS: Where should people that are interested in learning more about this solution, where should they go for more information?

KEN BYWATERS: Well, there are two places to go. The first is our website, which is berbeesoftware.com, or send an email to ipt-apps@berbee.com.

BRENT BURNS: Ken, thank you very much for sharing your time with us today. We really appreciate it and very interesting solution. Thank you.

KEN BYWATERS: All right. Well, thank you.