

BRENT BURNS: Welcome to the Cisco Unified Communications Podcast Series for Government. I'm your host, Brent Burns. Good morning, Chris. Thanks so much for joining us today.

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Good to be here, Brent. Thank you.

BRENT BURNS: Tell us a little bit about your background. How long have you been working with government customers?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: I've been working in the government vertical market for about five years now.

BRENT BURNS: Can you tell some of the government constituents that are listening about shared voice services?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL Shared Services focuses on how government agencies and organizations can build shared infrastructure that can be shared across organization boundaries. Government has grown up as independent silos that focus on the specific mission of the organization. However, there is a significant amount of common infrastructure across organizations that we can share and reuse to reduce our operating costs. And UC, Unified Communications Shared Services is a great example of one of those technology-based approaches that can be a shared resource across all of government organizations.

BRENT BURNS: What are the common advantages for a government agency to use shared or hosted services for unified communications?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL Well, the most common advantage is cost reduction: sharing a common infrastructure with reduced cost in acquisition, reduced cost in management because it's straightforward to manage infrastructure that's shared across groups. It doesn't really stop there. It really starts to get greater benefits when you look at collaboration capabilities across groups. Where you have a common set of tools, organizations can share and reuse always in the same foundational platform, allows anyone in the organization to have visibility and be able to reach out at any moment across the organization to answer a citizen's question or to answer a question they may have about how to develop and deliver citizen service.

BRENT BURNS: Chris, we've talked about collaboration on our Unified Communications Podcast Series, and I'm very interested in the capabilities that it brings to government customers. The concern that it brings up is, what about security?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL That's a very good question. One of the key benefits of this Hosted Unified Communications solution is that it does an excellent job of partitioning or segmenting the solution between organizations. So, a government organization can decide who belongs in each group, and those groups behave as essentially virtual voice platforms, and the people in those groups may or may not be able to see anybody outside of those groups depending upon how the persons are established. And that same segmentation at the application level for voice can be carried down into the network level. So the network behaves as if it were physically separate even though it's a shared resource.

BRENT BURNS: Most government customers are familiar with the concept of hosted service in telephony with Centrex capabilities. Are you referring to a next-generation Centrex or how does that play into the Shared Services model?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL The legacy Centrex offering is an often very simple voice services with some features that are integrated into the shared PSTN switch that offers some level of what would be like a PBX service offering for premises-based PBX. But the problem with that is that it really doesn't offer the advanced features which are typically experienced with unified

CISCO UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT: HOSTED UC

communications. There are limited features for collaboration and presence, instant messaging, those kinds of things that you think of in the realm of unified communications. While there are some service providers that are offering an IP-Centrex offering, they typically have trouble scaling to meet the needs of the larger customers that we experience in our marketplace. Cisco's Hosted Unified Communications solution scales wonderfully. We have customers right now with hundreds of thousands of phones on the platform today with no trouble. We also are delivering near parity with all the unified communications features of Cisco's premises-based products. So you get the benefits of the rich feature set of unified communications and collaboration without the need to install and manage the physical infrastructure and equipment on premises. You get those benefits through a per-seat, per-month contract with the service provider.

BRENT BURNS: What's the process like for somebody that's in a current Centrex environment to move to the Hosted Unified Communications solution from Cisco that you're referring to, Chris?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Whether it's a similar service provider or a different service provider offering this Hosted Unified Communications solution, there's going to be a migration path from the Centrex offering to this Hosted Unified Communications solution. What's really intriguing, though, with Hosted Unified Communications is that the existing systems that are deployed on-premises like key systems, small PBXs, even large PBXs, and call managers, can be brought under the overall dial-plan umbrella of this Hosted Unified Communications solution so that no matter what system the customers are using across their broader enterprise, the numbering plan can be uniform and the communications path with transferring calls across the broader enterprise can be transparent.

BRENT BURNS: So government customers that are moving to a solution like Hosted Unified Communications solution from Cisco can keep their existing numbers that they're using today?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Yes, they can. Even if they have premises-based technology, the Hosted Unified Communications solution has sophisticated numbering-plan schemes that allow them to manage the same numbering plan and the same dial numbers internally and externally for those deployments.

BRENT BURNS: Chris, can you share with us some of the benefits that customers are communicating back to you?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Well, there are a few significant benefits of moving toward a Hosted Unified Communications solution. They include very rapid turn-up of services. Some of our customers are able to turn up tens of sites over a week to bring those sites online to the uniform dial plan and post it to Unified Communications. That's made possible because we're able to integrate with legacy systems as well as transition from legacy to this hosted platform very seamlessly. Additionally, once they migrate into the platform, the features and benefits of unified communications far outweigh what our typical customers have experienced with Centrex services. They are getting features like unified messaging, where your voice messaging is integrated with your email. Features such as collaboration tools where you can do video and voice and data collaboration no matter where you are across organizations that may be spread throughout the entire state or the country. Features like presence integrated with telephony so that you can see the availability of people you need to communicate with before you place the call. That improves your productivity and improves the ability to collaborate. Those are just a few examples of the advanced features that customers can get, features that make the government more responsive to the citizen and business needs.

BRENT BURNS: Chris, this sounds like it could be a big change for the way government normally does business.

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: When a citizen or business calls the government to reach out and ask a specific question, that contact center agent is able to leverage Cisco's technology in this Unified Communications umbrella of features to be able to see who's available to answer the question, maybe even provide a back channel instant message to somebody who's an expert in the

CISCO UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT: HOSTED UC

organization about that topic, receive an answer and then respond back with an answer. This is an in-one communication. It doesn't have to be repeated calls or transfers to different groups. This technology allows immediate collaboration for the organization to respond immediately to the questions and the concerns of other constituents.

BRENT BURNS: Does the Shared Services solution that you're referring to, Chris, provide any future-proofing for government customers?

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Hosted Unified Communications solution is a fully integrated platform. The platform is highly scalable for capacity to support the needs of government customers of any size, small or large. It's also designed to be in lockstep with Cisco's innovation for unified communications and to integrate with partner innovation through our standards-based interface. So it offers a future-proof platform for customers to be able to benefit from the innovation in the marketplace and apply it as rapidly as you deem necessary.

BRENT BURNS: Thanks so much for joining us today, Chris. We really enjoyed all of your insight.

CHRIS SHENEFIEL: Thank you, Brent. It was a pleasure being on the podcast. Thank you.

BRENT BURNS: Thank you for joining the Cisco Government Unified Communications Podcast Series, and a special thanks to our guest, Chris Shenefiel.