CISCO SYSTEMS

Customer Case Study

With Cisco SONA, Retail Property Group Exceeds Expectations

Westfield Group aligns network vision with business goals for video conferencing; gains the bonus of IP telephony and rapid service rollouts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westfield Group
- Shopping center group (investments, development, management)
- Sydney, Australia
- 120 shopping centers; four countries

BUSINESS CHALLENGES
- Four diverging regional networks
- Economically meeting user demand for high-quality video conferencing (central to corporate culture)
- Establishing company standards for communications in general

NETWORK SOLUTIONS
- New global network deployment based on Cisco SONA.
- On-network integrated service solutions for video conferencing and security (Cisco Security Agent, PIX firewalls).
- IP telephony services deployed for global four-digit dialing and wireless access service for mobility.

BUSINESS RESULTS
- Video usage has increased, without a proportional increase in the previous costs for outside services.
- Future services can be more cost-effectively deployed while accommodating the decentralized IT model.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE
- Grow services and applications to support growth in operations.
- Better facilitate company communication styles (cost-effective choices).
- Investigate tenant and customer services for retail properties.

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BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Westfield Group, in Sydney, Australia, has grown to become the world's largest retail property group with investment interests in 120 shopping centers in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The company was formed with the 2004 merger of Westfield Holdings, Westfield Trust, and Westfield America Trust. The merger gave the Group a financial capacity far greater than that of any one of the former Westfield entities, and a global operating and financial structure to aggressively pursue global opportunities.

Business Issues

The highly collaborative company culture led to an early reliance on technology, and each of the Westfield entities evolved its own network to tie together its local offices and to connect with regional networks. In 2000, Rick Gehringer was promoted to chief information officer (CIO) with the mission of standardizing the company's diverging technology foundation. "Our global business demanded effective communications to bring together management and employees from around the world," says Gehringer.

IT Issues

In particular, video communications were becoming increasingly complex and expensive. "Early on, we began using video conferencing to defer travel costs and allow more face-to-face collaborations," says Gehringer. "We were running into reliability problems with video, and it was clear that we needed a solid, global foundation for all communications."

With representation from all four Westfield regions, Gehringer formed a team to define the company's network vision. The objectives for the design included:

- Converging data, voice, and video traffic onto one corporate network.
- Enabling a rapid rollout of network services, starting with an on-network video conferencing and bridging service to replace the out-sourced video conferencing solutions.
- Facilitating decentralized IT management (regional teams) for in-house support model (no managed services).
- Helping ensure security of confidential corporate information assets and communications.

NETWORK SOLUTIONS

The Westfield team worked with PBM IT Solutions, a consulting firm with a long history of networking experience with the Westfield U.S. operation. Input was gathered from the regions and an architecture developed for the new global network. "The Cisco® Service-Oriented Network Architecture (SONA) framework helped us meet all of Westfield's business objectives," says John Bristol, CTO for PBM IT Solutions. "A global network overlay ties together all four regions. LAN and WAN foundations are standardized and support a services layer for the company's mission-critical applications. The IT groups in the four regions now have standardized services for the critical company communications applications."

The modularized network separates Internet-facing and Westfield-facing traffic, and employs a traditional distribution, access, and core layout. The services deployed to date include:

- **Video conferencing:** All internal video traffic is now carried over the Westfield global network, with Tandberg solutions in the 45 corporate conference rooms. As a service within the SONA framework, the IP video solution gives them a more efficient solution with fewer required circuits. Any improvements to the network automatically improve video, reducing the work of optimizing this critical service.
- **Security:** Cisco Security Agent and PIX® Firewall solutions protect the LANs and WANs. The combination provides a holistic security service, integrated with the network itself, which can be centrally managed and easily adjusted to reflect any changes in corporate policies.
- **IP telephony:** Although not a requirement for the original network redesign, the SONA framework made it easy to deploy companywide IP telephony service. Employees enjoy the convenience of four-digit global dialing, and the on-network solution offers operational efficiencies and centralized management. Although a bonus, IP telephony has yielded cost savings and user satisfaction.
- **Mobility:** Westfield continues to explore new services that are now easily deployable on the global network (for example, wireless access points and remote access). Without a significant investment, they can try out new services and evaluate user acceptance.

"Westfield is a great example of a company that has developed and deployed a technology vision that can contribute to their success," says Bristol. "Our knowledge of their business – combined with the proven Cisco architecture – helped us tailor a Cisco SONA solution to their unique culture and business. In their early years, Westfield invested to get the technology they needed. Now the company can much more cost-effectively deploy innovative services and fully utilize their new global network for communications."

The new network architecture was first deployed in the local-area networks within each of the four regions. Then the WAN network was deployed to introduce the new global foundation for services.

BUSINESS RESULTS

The new service-oriented network gave Westfield immediate benefits in terms of increased video quality while being more cost-effective. The network-enabled video solution was also more cost-effective, especially since the company expenditures relating to video had already pushed them from dialup to dedicated leased lines. Video usage has further increased since the deployment. By converging data, voice, and video onto one network, Westfield has been able to reduce costs for "triple-play" services.

They have also seen a significant extra benefit. The same unified network deployed to more effectively deliver video collaboration has also enabled the deployment of applications as services, which can be managed centrally. "Businesses have needed the SONA concept for quite some time. With our new architecture, we can respond to the needs of the company – applications can be rapidly deployed as services and managed in a consistent manner across all four of our regions to simplify support while improving the end-user experiences for all employees and partners," says Gehringer.

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NEXT STEPS

While continuing to expand in-house services, such as IP telephony, security, and mobility, the new secure foundation also allows Westfield to look outside to its customers and partners. The IT team recently attended a seminar to explore the potential for network-enabled shopping experiences, and feels confident that they are now in a position to maintain leadership in all areas of their business.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Cisco Service-Oriented Architecture, visit: http://www.cisco.com/go/sona.

To learn more about Westfield Group, visit: http://westfield.com/corporate/about.

To learn more about PBM IT Solutions, visit: http://www.pbmitsolutions.com.

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