



Idaho Service Branch Deploys Modern Communications Tools



Idaho Army National Guard installs a collaboration solution to help enable statewide connectivity.

Executive Summary:

- **Customer Name:** Idaho Army National Guard
- **Industry:** Federal, Defense
- **Location:** Boise, Idaho
- **Number of Employees:** 3,000 employees

Challenge:

- Connect with employees across the state more quickly and efficiently
- Reduce in-state travel budget by 30 percent
- Streamline desktop support processes and alleviate challenges for IT team

Solution:

- Installed collaboration tools to instantly connect employees
- Updated desktop support services to support operations
- Secured network with standardized equipment

Results:

- Reduced average desktop support phone call time by eight minutes
- Improved productivity by providing instant connectivity to all units
- Projected to reduce in-state travel budget by 30 percent

Challenge

The Idaho Army National Guard (ID ARNG), headquartered in Boise, Idaho, is a part of the United States Army and the United States National Guard. During the past several years, ID ARNG has set the standard for service in the state and collected a number of awards for its contributions to the citizens of Idaho.

ID ARNG's IT team is a small group of 21 individuals who are responsible for supporting roughly 3,000 employees. While its largest base is located in Boise, ID ARNG has 28 total sites throughout the state. Because its operations are geographically dispersed, and its existing communication solution began to show its age, ID ARNG started to experience inefficiencies with its network. Employees in Boise had a hard time communicating with colleagues in more remote areas, which made productivity and communications a great challenge.

While geography is a major hurdle in ID ARNG's operations, perhaps the biggest challenge is that only 700 of its employees are full-time. The other 2,300 individuals work some weekends during the month, which makes reliable communication even more essential to the organization. In addition, several part-time employees who don't live in Boise have to commute up to to eight hours each way to work on the Boise base for just a few days.

"Our schedule was not only time-intensive, it was costly for our organization," says John Aberasturi, the lead network engineer with ID ARNG. "Our leaders have mandatory meetings and commitments when they travel, and we knew our budget and their time could be better served in more thoughtful ways."

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“While our new Cisco collaboration solution will help us save money and be more connected, the biggest benefit that we’ve seen so far is that it’s completely changed how efficient our employees are.”

John Aberasturi
Lead Network Engineer
Idaho Army National Guard

In an industry where clear communication is mission-critical, ID ARNG’s IT team determined that it needed a more efficient way to get in touch with its employees across the state. Additionally, ID ARNG has wanted to meet a goal of cutting its in-state travel budget by 30 percent. To achieve these objectives, ID ARNG began to explore modern collaboration and support solutions.

Solution

Having been a Cisco customer for several years, the ID ARNG IT team turned to Cisco to learn about new products that might help address their challenges. The Cisco account team understood their situation and suggested that a video conferencing and desktop support solution could meet ID ARNG’s needs – especially for communicating with part-time employees hundreds of miles away.

“Face-to-face interaction is a critical part of our operations, and we needed a collaboration solution that could connect multiple employees throughout the state immediately and seamlessly,” says Aberasturi.

Ultimately, ID ARNG decided to deploy both Cisco WebEx® and Cisco Jabber® solutions to connect employees throughout the state. With these tools, part-time employees can save money by video-conferencing from home, and can instantly communicate with their units on their mobile devices.

Before Cisco WebEx and Cisco Jabber, part-time employees were difficult to reach or find instantly – especially when they weren’t on the clock. Now, both full-time and part-time employees can install Cisco Jabber on their cell phones to be fully connected to their base 24-hours a day. This tool has made it easier to communicate with their unit in real-time, and they no longer have to feel like they aren’t integrated into operations.



Aside from its new collaboration solutions, ID ARNG also decided to deploy a new desktop support platform. Since ID ARNG’s travel office is staffed with two individuals who could not access employee issues on their screen in real-time, the organization decided to use its new Cisco collaboration solutions in three different ways – to follow along on an employee’s screen, to share their own screens, and to immediately point employees in the right direction.

While the ease of accessibility and communications was a huge factor in ID ARNG’s decision, the level of security that the Cisco platform provided was another plus.

“By standardizing with Cisco equipment, we don’t have to expose the network to potential outside threats,” says Aberasturi. “Our employees now feel more secure and integrated with their organization.”

Results

With its latest collaboration and desktop support solution, ID ARNG has already experienced a number of benefits, and the Cisco team has proven to be helpful in deploying the tools and training employees.

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Product List

Network Management

- Desktop Support solution

Video

- Cisco WebEx

Collaboration

- Cisco Jabber

Although several of the benefits of its new conferencing tools are forthcoming, the results of ID ARNG's desktop support solution have been more immediate. The updated platform gives ID ARNG's travel system support staff more visibility into employee's desktops, so they can address issues more quickly and efficiently. The new solution has also helped to reduce the average time of a service call from 12 minutes to four.

In terms of the collaboration, ID ARNG employees are beginning to attend meetings from home and are starting to use Cisco Jabber to connect with their units. While the solution hasn't been fully deployed, ID ARNG is confident that a 30 percent reduction in its travel budget is entirely possible with its new solution.

Overall, ID ARNG has taken an important step in its journey to a more secure and efficient communications platform. Unlike before, it can now connect with employees instantly to keep them up to date on important operations, strategies, and tactics.

Next Steps

While ID ARNG has already experienced a number of benefits with its new solution, the organization is always looking to improve communications.

The ID ARNG's IT team is interested in migrating Cisco Jabber and Cisco WebEx to its tactical networks in the future. This way, ID ARNG's military planning and tactical operations will be online using Cisco Jabber and tightly secured through a standardized network. Additionally, ID ARNG is considering Cisco Nexus® switches for some of the state's remote sites to improve operational flexibility and scalability.

In addition to expansion, Carlson and Valles are testing new requirements for visualizing their research, and using Cisco UCS to on-board additional integrations.

"Ultimately, we want to support scientific research through education, training, hosted services, and computational resources," says Carlson. "With Cisco, we are fulfilling this mission thanks to high reliability, extended support, future scalability, and enhanced flexibility."



For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Collaboration Solutions, go to: webex.com/products/enterprise.html



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