

Supermarket Chain Provides Better Customer Service with Cisco IP Telephony and Unified Communications

This chain of supermarkets improved the customer service, employee reporting, and cost efficiency features of its phone and contact center systems.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SUPERMARKET CHAIN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 stores in the eastern United States • 27,000 employees
BUSINESS CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve flexibility by adding new operations applications to the phone system • Reduce phone costs by standardizing the system across the stores as well as taking advantage of low-cost toll calls • Maximize productivity by bringing information directly to the employee on demand
NETWORK SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Unified Communications for Retail
BUSINESS RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales associates now spend more time face-to-face with the customer • Remote, real-time management and maintenance of phones • The corporate image is enhanced as a leading-edge service organization • New, advanced service applications for employees and customers have been implemented

Business Challenge

Over the past decade, this chain of supermarkets has increasingly relied on Cisco networking technologies to build business and enhance customer relationships throughout its expanding stores. The company implemented Cisco voice-over-IP technologies in 2003 and was an early user of edge routing. Most recently, this innovative company decided that it was time to switch an IP telephony solution based on a converged network.

“We’ve been working with Cisco in many different ways for the past ten years,” says the IT director. “We knew we were ready for greater consistency in our telephony between the stores, and we were looking for significant cost savings and better productivity as a result.”

The company found that it was losing money because several analog-based Key systems in its stores and distribution centers had been provided by different

vendors over a 10 year period and high maintenance costs and multiple contracts were making these phone options less effective. Additionally, associates moving from store to store had to retrain on a new system for each location. So the company decided to start implementing a single Cisco collaborative communications solution starting in each new store to incrementally standardize the system.

The company also sought greater flexibility in its phone system by deploying applications that would increase the capabilities of each hand set. Such applications include time clocking and attendance, computer-assisted ordering, inventory access and out-of-stocks notification, personnel and operations, and product lookup.

“We calculated that simply by taking out the traditional time clocks and reducing the number of PCs in each store, even by one or two, we’ll have paid for the system,” recalls the company’s IT director. He also believes that enabling this new technology helps the company establish itself as a leading-edge, customer-oriented business. “We’re about service—that is our primary focus,” he says. “If we have solutions that are efficient and effective, they showcase our whole company by creating an environment of quality and care.”

Network Solution

Today, the company's infrastructure is based on an end-to-end Cisco ~~Intelligent Retail Network composed~~ [Connected Retail solution](#) of Cisco routing and switching, wireless, telephony, and security products. The network streamlines business operations, improves visibility through the supply chain, and enhances the customer experience to meet business-critical objectives. This robust network is designed on the principles of the Cisco Service-Oriented Network Architecture (SONA) to accelerate applications, business processes, and profitability. The infrastructure uses Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series switches in the core of two data centers located at the headquarters. Redundancy is provided by the Cisco ONS 15500 series of optical switches connecting to a backup data center. Cisco also supports wireless handheld capabilities used to direct store delivery, decision support, ordering, and inventory, running centralized applications fed back to two IBM Z-series 990 mainframes and providing users with sub-second response times.

Providing the consistency and reliability the stores require, this powerful retail solution is now augmented by the new Cisco Collaborative Communications IP telephony solution, with up to 32 Cisco 7960, 7940, and 7905 series IP phones deployed in each new store. These phones are enabled by a Cisco 2811 Integrated Services Router (ISR) located in each branch, using the Catalyst 3750 Series switch to provide both data and voice access. Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express, a software-based call-processing component of the Cisco IP solution, rapidly extends telephony features and functions to phones at each remote site, while Survivable Remote Site Telephony (SRST) serves as an additional backup call manager for extra redundancy.

The router also supports the Cisco Unified Contact Center to provide intelligent contact routing, call treatment, and multi-channel contact management over the IP infrastructure. The Unified Contact Center's increased reporting capabilities for call center statistics have helped the company make more informed decisions about call center operations, resulting in better efficiency and availability. For phone administration, the company relies on Cisco Unity Express, a network module of the Cisco collaborative communications portfolio designed specifically to provide phone services to each store. Cisco Unity Express allows the company to provide employees with affordable messaging and greeting services, phone prompts, and an easy-to-use GUI for voice mail and auto-attendant capabilities.

Business Results

Employees are already seeing productivity improvements with the new Cisco installation. Standardized, easy-to-use services free up associates' time, allowing them to focus more effectively on customers to maximize sales. Once the planned phone applications to provide personnel and order capabilities are up and running, the company plans to start replacing the old Key systems in the existing stores. This way, the new phone features will pay for the installation costs of wiring and hardware. Other proposed applications include improving customer access via kiosk-style phones to enable price checking, advertising, and special offers.

PRODUCT LIST

Routing and Switching

- Cisco 2811 Series Integrated Services Routers
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series switches
- Cisco Catalyst 3750 and 3560 Series switches
- Cisco ONS 15500 Series optical switches

Voice and Unified Communications

- Cisco 7960, 7940, and 7905 Series IP Phones
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
- Cisco Unity Express

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Solutions for Retail, go to:

<https://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/retail/index.html> <http://www.cisco.com/go/retail/>



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