

Building a More Agile Construction Company

Innovative construction firm connects staff and customers with a Cisco® Smart Business Communications System



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

XL CONSTRUCTION

- Industry: Construction
- Location: Milpitas, CA
- Number of Employees: 200 employees located across several sites

CHALLENGE

- Keep employees connected with each other, clients, and subcontractors as they move between job sites and projects

SOLUTION

- Communications system brings together all voice and data communications on a single, secure, manageable network

RESULTS

- Flexible network phone system saves up to US\$2000 per job site and improves communication with clients and project team members

Challenge

Since 1992, XL Construction has specialized in building complex, challenging construction projects for the healthcare, biopharmaceutical, advanced technology, and private education markets. The company prides itself on delivering consistently high customer satisfaction, and supports every project with a team of experts and partners. However, keeping everyone on these project teams in touch in a fast-moving business environment is challenging.

Like many construction firms, XL Construction is geographically dispersed, with small offices located at each construction site. At the beginning of each project, XL Construction would have to hire a vendor to install phones at each site and create a new set of

phone numbers for everyone working on the project. When a job was completed, the phones were turned off. If a customer or vendor left a message at an employee's "old" number, the message might never be retrieved. Phone numbers were constantly changing, and simply keeping the company directory up to date was a huge challenge.

"We have projects throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, and each time we set up a new job site we are essentially setting up a new small office," says Eric Raff, president of XL Construction. "A project might require hundreds of vendors and subcontractors, all of whom need to communicate by phone and PC. We sometimes faced delays in having a phone vendor set up new service at a job site. Managing and distributing new phone numbers for everyone on the team required a great deal of cost and effort."

When XL Construction began planning a move to a new headquarters, the company wanted an agile phone system that would work the way that its business did, growing and changing to support dozens of new projects a year. The company chose a Cisco Unified Communications solution that brings together all of the company's people, phones, and data networking on a single, all-in-one solution.

Solution

To build and support its network, XL Construction worked closely with Wavelength Datacom (WavData), a Premier Certified Cisco Partner. A full-service vendor, WavData offers a broad range of business hardware, software, network, and support services, freeing up XL Construction to focus on its core business.

"We now have one vendor in WavData that is taking care of both our network and technical services, as well as telecommunications," says Raff. "From my perspective, it makes our business operations much simpler."

WavData installed Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express on a Cisco Integrated Services Router and Cisco Unified IP Phones to replace the XL Construction phone system. The Cisco solution includes time-saving phone features like four-digit dialing to help employees get in touch with colleagues in seconds. "It's much faster if you're calling a job site in a different area code to simply dial the extension instead," says Wendy Goodman, marketing manager at XL Construction.

XL Construction uses the powerful integrated messaging tools in Cisco Unity Express to make sure every voicemail reaches its recipient. "If an employee in the field receives a voicemail, we have set up the system to also automatically email the message as an attachment," says Ian Wallace, managing partner at WavData. "XL Construction employees often move around, and can potentially miss a voicemail at their desk. The Cisco solution eliminates this issue."

The new Cisco solution also supports all of the company's data networking, enabling its employees to stay connected to the people and information they need no matter where they are located.

"All of our job sites are connected to our headquarters network," says Raff. "We use secure virtual private networking [VPN] between job sites to share files and drawings, and exchange emails. This security is important to us, because we need to safeguard not just our own business data, but our clients' information as well."

"In the past, we spent up to \$2000 to set up phones and voicemail at each remote job site. Our Cisco Unified Communications solution has allowed us to effectively eliminate those expenses."

– Eric Raff, President, XL Construction

Results

Cisco Unified Communications lets XL Construction replace its separate phone and data systems with an integrated communications system that is easy to manage and modify. Installing an IP phone at a new job site is as simple as plugging it into the wall. By eliminating visits from the phone company, XL Construction can save time and money every time a new project begins.



“As soon as we establish an Internet connection at a job location, we can plug in phones and have them up and working,” says Raff. “In the past, we spent up to \$2000 to hire a vendor to set up phones and voicemail at each remote job site. Our Cisco Unified Communications solution has allowed us to effectively eliminate those expenses. We expect the system to pay for itself within about three years.”

Employees can keep the same phone number, which follows them from job to job. Voice messages will continue to reach them even after a project ends, and XL Construction no longer wastes time updating its phone directories. Most importantly, by making employees and business partners easier to reach, the solution helps XL Construction deliver more responsive service, keeping its clients satisfied.

“Communication is one of the key benefits that we sell our clients on,” says Goodman. “Any solution that increases our ability to be able to communicate well with clients and to be more available to them is definitely a value.”

Setting up new jobs has become faster, because XL Construction can prewire its job trailers permanently, instead of waiting for an outside vendor to rewire a trailer and install new phones each time that a project begins. Managing the system has become much easier as well, because there is no need to sort through billing and paperwork from several different phone vendors.

“The Cisco solution frees us from managing multiple phone bills from all the different job sites,” says Raff. “In the past, we had to spend time managing and accounting for bills, and tracking which phone systems had been turned on and off.”

Next Steps

XL Construction is already discussing ways to add new features to its Cisco network to help staff become more knowledgeable and to stay more competitive.

PRODUCT LIST	
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Adaptive Security Appliances
Voice and Unified Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express • Cisco Unity Express • Cisco Unified IP Phones 7900 Series

“We do a considerable amount of training, including sustainable design and construction (“green building”) training. Our staff and partners are located all around the Bay Area, and it’s sometimes difficult for people to attend,” says Raff. “We’d like to use our network to stream video to computers so they can attend a training class wherever they’re working.”

With Cisco Unified Communications, adding video to communications is as easy as placing a phone call. XL Construction looks forward to making the most of its rich network communication for years to come.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solution, visit www.cisco.com/go/smb or find a partner in your area www.cisco.com/go/partnerlocator.



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