



StayinFront lives up to its name with Cisco Unified Communications solution

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– Andrew Chahine, Systems Administrator, StayinFront

StayinFront is a leading developer of customer relationship management and e-business software for companies in the life sciences, consumer and business sectors. It creates and adapts its applications to allow customers to manage aspects of their operations such as compliance and regulatory workflow and updating customer profiles and information.

With offices in Sydney and Melbourne, the Australian company is part of a global business with solutions implemented in more than 20 countries.

Business challenge

StayinFront regularly found itself transferring more than 100 GB of data such as software code between offices in Sydney, Melbourne, New Zealand and India each month. However, the network was slow and file transfers could take a long time.

It used an old analog PABX for regular phone communication. This system was unreliable and difficult to manage and maintain. Staff used PC-based consumer voice over IP (VoIP) software for inter-office calls. However, the software had no voicemail capability and made it difficult to contact another staff member if the VoIP software wasn’t running on both PCs.

StayinFront decided to invest in a new networking and communications system that would provide a more functional telephony environment for the 45 employees in its two Australian offices. It wanted to install a feature-rich IP telephony system to maintain the company’s policy of being an early adopter of new, leading-edge technology.

For example, to facilitate communication between staff, it wanted the capability to use wireless IP phones and have extension dialling between the Sydney and Melbourne offices. The company was also looking for productivity-boosting features such as direct dialling from Microsoft Office Outlook. It was important that the new network infrastructure be robust and reliable to maintain the integrity of data and voice communications and offer lowest-cost routing for long-distance phone calls.

Solution

In early 2006, StayinFront commissioned Cisco partner Efficient Data Communications to design and implement a complete network and communications infrastructure.

“One of the key selling points of Cisco was that it was a complete solution that didn’t require other vendors’ products,” said Andrew Lowy, Director, Efficient Data Communications.

“StayinFront was sold on the research and development Cisco puts into its networking equipment and software; they knew they wouldn’t be left behind as technology evolved.”

By April 2006, Efficient Data Communications had installed two Cisco Catalyst 3750 24-port switches, a Cisco 2811-series router, 20 Cisco IP phones, 40 IP softphones and Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express software to manage the phone system.

Efficient Data Communications set up a data link between StayinFront’s Sydney and Melbourne offices. By transcoding all voice calls between the two locations, the allocated voice bandwidth did not compromise the performance of other business-critical applications.

Efficient Data Communications implemented an interactive voice response (IVR) system and designed an auto-attendant script so that StayinFront could direct customer calls to the sales department without having to go through a helpdesk or getting lost in a queue. Efficient Data Communications also installed a virtual private network (VPN) to allow staff working offsite to access StayinFront’s internal applications.

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Results

StayinFront immediately noticed the increase in data transfer rates as a result of implementing the new network.

“The office network went from 100Mbps to 1Gbps and we really noticed the faster transfer rates for large files,” said Chahine.

With IP softphones, staff can make and receive calls from their PCs and dial directly from Microsoft Office Outlook. A robust IP telephony link between the Melbourne and Sydney offices carries voice traffic over the company’s wide-area network link and allows extension dialling and call transferring across the two locations. This enables toll bypass, which has eliminated inter-office call costs.

“IP telephony is definitely cheaper in the long run for the company,” said Chahine.

“We now have more control over the phone system as well. We can easily and quickly allocate extension numbers.”

With the wireless network, staff can set up equipment quickly and easily for presentations and training sessions without having to worry about network cables and physical connections.

“The wireless network allows staff to connect quickly and easily and move around more freely in the office,” said Chahine. “We have access in our training rooms and the main office, so we can just walk in and connect straightaway.”

StayinFront’s IVR system with auto-attendant scripting has freed up reception staff to carry out office administration duties without worrying about missing technical support or sales calls.

Efficient Data Communications also installed door stations in StayinFront’s Sydney and Melbourne offices to improve security and make it easier to manage access.

“It’s very practical; when a guest or courier rings the door buzzer, we can pick up the phone, speak to the person, dial a number and open the front door,” said Chahine.

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