

City Handles Calls During Democratic National Convention with Cloud Collaboration



City of Charlotte migrated from on-premises solution for its multiple contact centers to secure cloud service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
Location: City of Charlotte, North Carolina	
Industry: Government	
Number of Employees: 6500 Employees	
CHALLENGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide excellent experience for residents and visitors who call City’s contact centers • Scale to meet increased call volume during Democratic National Convention • Reduce government costs 	
SOLUTION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrated from on-premises servers for communications and contact center to NWN cloud services, including NCloud Hosted Collaboration based on Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution 	
RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered excellent caller experience to citizens, during and after political convention • Offloaded management of communications platforms from City IT team, freeing it to focus on citizen service • Lowered total cost of ownership for contact center by approximately US\$100,000 annually 	

Challenge

The City of Charlotte, North Carolina, views information technology as a strategic tool for efficient citizen service, economic growth, and public safety. In fact, *Forbes* magazine has ranked the City among the top 20 most wired cities in America.

Citizens can obtain information and services through multiple contact centers, including a 3-1-1 center for nonemergency requests; a transportation and road conditions hotline; a crime-reporting service; and a utility bill payment center. The contact centers receive 140,000 calls monthly, which are answered by approximately 200 agents.

By 2011, the voice system for the contact centers was nearing the end of its support contract. That’s when the City received the news that it had been selected to host the 2012 Democratic National Convention (DNC). “The DNC added to the urgency of replacing the voice system,” says Bellverie Ross, senior program manager for the City of Charlotte. “We had to act quickly to make sure the contact center could support the higher call volume that would result from an influx of 50,000 delegates, members of the press, and visitors.” Complicating the challenge, the City had only 18 months to complete all technology projects needed for the convention.

Ross decided at the outset to look for a hosted voice and contact center solution in the cloud instead of an on-premises system. “Maintaining an on-premises contact center platform would require hiring and providing ongoing training for multiple people with different skill sets, and the City had neither the time nor the budget,” she says. “Working with a cloud provider would give us access to trained professionals with the depth and breadth of experience to make sure the service was ready on time, provided an excellent citizen experience, and was operationally efficient.”

“Cisco Unified Communications solutions are open, and can integrate with systems from other vendors that are hosted in any location, on-premises or in the cloud. Not having to spend time making different systems work together gives our IT departments more time to focus on core business activities.”

— Bellverie Ross, Senior Program Manager, City of Charlotte, North Carolina

Solution

After asking industry analysts for their recommendations, the City selected cloud services from NWN. The City already had a trusted relationship with NWN, which has undergone a rigorous certification and third-party audit of its service to earn the Cisco® Powered service designation.

Today, the City of Charlotte’s contact center platform includes multiple elements in different locations that all work smoothly together:

- The 200 contact center agents connect to a hosted service in NWN’s data center, based on Cisco Unified Communications Manager; Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise; Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal for interactive voice response; and Cisco Unified Intelligence Center for reporting.
- The contact center platform integrates with applications that are hosted both on-premises and in public clouds, including call accounting software and call recording and screen capture software.
- Approximately 100 other City employees receive voice services through NWN’s NCloud Hosted Collaboration service, which is based on Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution (HCS) and is a certified Cisco Powered service. The City plans to gradually connect other personnel to the hosted cloud solution as existing Centrex service contracts expire.

For people who call the contact centers, the experience is completely integrated. A resident who wants to pay a water bill, for example, is prompted to press a key to indicate the purpose of the call. Then another behind-the-scenes system looks up the citizen’s record to present the appropriate information, such as balance owed and payment due date. Another vendor’s software records the call and what the agent enters on screen, both for training and complaint investigation. “Cisco Unified Communications solutions are open, and can integrate with systems from other vendors that are hosted in any location, on premises or in the cloud,” Ross says. “Not having to spend time making different systems work together gives our IT departments more time to focus on core business activities.”

NWN customized the cloud solution for the City of Charlotte; keeps the servers updated with the latest features; and provides maintenance services such as telephony extension moves, adds, and changes. NWN also implemented Cisco security technologies to protect confidential citizen data, both during the calls and in recordings. Technology upgrades are built into the ongoing monitoring and management plan, simplifying budgeting.

The hosted collaboration solution is the latest of several Cisco collaboration solutions that the City has adopted for efficient and effective government. For example, every fire station has a Cisco TelePresence® unit so that personnel can join meetings or training sessions from the station, where they are available for incident response. In addition, the City uses Cisco WebEx® Meetings for web conferences related to IT project management, corporate communications, and departmental police meetings. The team implementing new enterprise resource planning software, which includes City personnel as well as contractors, uses WebEx for project status meetings and training.

Results

Scaled to Provide Excellent Caller Experience During Major Event

Throughout the DNC, the contact centers remained available so that residents and visitors could obtain information and pay bills. During and after the DNC, contact center managers used Cisco Unified Intelligence Center, part of the cloud service, to understand the caller experience. For the first time, managers can review the recording of the entire call, even if an agent transfers a call to a supervisor. This capability helps managers identify training opportunities to continually improve citizen satisfaction.

Lowered Government Operational Costs

For taxpayers, the biggest benefit of the City's decision to use NWN's hosted services is lower cost of government services. "Although cost savings were not the primary driver for the hosted collaboration solution, we are saving taxpayers approximately \$100,000 annually," Ross says.

Freed IT Team to Focus on Strategic Priorities

What's more, offloading the hosting and management of the contact center infrastructure to NWN's trained engineers frees City personnel to focus on their core competency: citizen service. "Now we have access to the expertise we need, when we need it," says Kimberly Laney, project manager for the City of Charlotte. "Our primary focus is delivering services to citizens, not providing telecommunications services."

Built Foundation to Increase Citizen Service Levels in the Future

NWN integrated its cloud solution with the City's call recording and call accounting systems, and will later connect it to more than 10 existing citizen relationship management applications and Microsoft SharePoint. When a citizen indicates the nature of the call (a found animal, for example), the agent sees the appropriate screen on the agent desktop. "Not having to train agents to use multiple separate applications, as we do now, will lower costs and help new agents become productive more quickly," Ross says.

Next Steps

Most departments continue to use on-premises voice systems or Centrex services, and the City plans to move them to NWN's NCloud Hosted Collaboration service as maintenance contracts expire. The City also plans to begin using the advanced collaboration capabilities in NCloud, such as presence and instant messaging. "We see NCloud Hosted Collaboration as a long-term strategic platform," Ross says.

About Cisco Powered Services

Cisco Powered is the industry standard for cloud and managed services. Based on validated architectures, Cisco Powered services minimize technology lifecycle complexity to reduce cost and risk. To help ensure superior levels of service, security, and 24/7 support, Cisco partners offering Cisco Powered services must undergo a rigorous certification and third-party audit of their solutions. By using Cisco Powered services, organizations can achieve faster time-to-value, experience assured performance, leverage open standards with continuous innovation, and connect with confidence.

PRODUCT LIST
Unified Communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution, delivered by NWN• Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise• Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal• Cisco Unified IP Phones 6900 Series and 8900 Series
TelePresence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cisco TelePresence Systems

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.

To learn more about Cisco Powered Services, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/ciscopowered>.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.



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