



Customer Case Study

Nonprofit Reduces Costs and Attracts Funding

Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center reduced telephony costs by 20 percent with a Cisco Unified Communications solution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services • Illinois • 675 Employees
BUSINESS CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce operational costs • Attract funding
NETWORK SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed Cisco Unified Communications solution for telephony, voicemail, and contact center, using an existing network based on the Cisco Smart Business Communications Architecture
BUSINESS RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced local- and long-distance costs by 20 percent • Enabled IT to manage telephony system with existing IP network skills • Strengthened funders’ confidence

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center is a private, nonprofit, state-licensed healthcare and social service agency providing comprehensive community-based programs for children, youth, and families. Approximately 675 employees, assisted by more than 150 volunteers, provide 80 support services and programs for nearly 35,000 individuals a year. These services include community health clinics, residential treatment centers, foster care, counseling, education, prevention, and community action. The organization has 40 sites, each staffed by two to 100 people.

Staff members rely on the voice system to find services for their clients, often calling other offices in the Aunt Martha organization. Previously, large offices had their own private branch exchange (PBX) systems, and smaller offices had individual telephone lines. Local- and long-distance calling and leased lines cost \$36,000 monthly, and support for the PBX systems added more costs. “The core competency for our IT staff is IP networks, not telephony, so we had to outsource management of the PBX systems,” says Scott Gebar, chief information officer. Another liability of using disparate systems was that staff members could not take advantage of telephony features for call transferring or voicemail forwarding between offices, impeding staff productivity.

Aunt Martha’s wanted a new voice system that IT could manage internally and that would reduce telephony costs and facilitate collaboration among staff in different offices. “We focused our search on VoIP [voice over IP] systems so that we could send voice traffic over our existing data infrastructure and reduce toll charges,” says Jerry Garvey, chief financial officer.

NETWORK SOLUTION

Aunt Martha’s data network is based on the Cisco® Smart Business Communications Architecture, an architectural framework that enables organizations to maximize the value of their network services and resources. Aunt Martha took advantage of its existing Cisco routers and switches to deploy a Cisco Unified Communications solution. “It made financial sense to capitalize on our Cisco network to deliver voice services, as well,” says Garvey.

Rather than migrate all sites to VoIP at once, the IT group decided to implement it in new offices as they opened, and in existing offices when their PBX leases expired. In 2004, the organization deployed Cisco Unified Communications in two new offices, using the built-in Cisco CallManager Express feature in Cisco Integrated Services Routers. Employees received Cisco Unified IP Phones. “Deploying Cisco Unified CallManager Express was simple,” says Garvey. “Employees immediately appreciated the integrated employee directory and four-digit dialing between different sites using IP telephony.”

The IT group decided to work with a partner to transition the first large site, headquarters, to IP telephony. Aunt Martha's selected Sentinel Technologies of Downer's Grove, Illinois, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner with specializations in unified communications, VPN security, routing and switching, and wireless. "We chose Sentinel because of their deployment expertise and the fact that they were willing to transfer their knowledge so that we could manage subsequent deployments ourselves," says Gebar.

Using a lifecycle services approach, Sentinel helped to prepare, plan, design, and deploy the Unified Communication system in partnership with Aunt Martha's IT team. In addition, Sentinel recommended the Cisco SMARTnet service and support package. This service protects Aunt Martha's Youth Services Organization with advanced hardware replacement if a device or system should fail and provides software updates to make sure applications run smoothly and are always up to date. Sentinel provides additional engineering support on a retainer basis, guaranteeing a call back within 15 minutes.

"We advised Aunt Martha's to deploy Cisco Unified CallManager for call processing in its data centers and major business centers, and to deliver call-processing services to smaller offices over the network," says Robb Christenson, account manager with Sentinel. If the network link from a small office to the main data center becomes unavailable, the Cisco router automatically routes voice traffic to the public switched telephone network (PSTN), so that staff and callers experience no interruption—a capability called Cisco Unified Survivable Remote Site Telephony. The Cisco Unified CallManager automatically resumes voice processing when the connection is restored. "Sentinel advised us as to what we could and could not do, and how to mitigate risk," says Gebar.

For voicemail, Sentinel deployed Cisco Unity® Connection, which is designed for organizations with up to 3000 people. Cisco Unity Connection improves the productivity of the organization's mobile employees, who can now call other users with simple voice commands and retrieve voice messages from their e-mail inbox or through any Web browser. In addition, employees can make sure that they do not miss important calls from clients or funders by setting up call-transfer rules using a Web interface.

Aunt Martha's uses Cisco Unified Contact Center Express for its IT help desk, which is staffed by four people. Employees who call the help desk like the queuing feature, which lets them know about how long they can expect to wait. The company plans to add skills-based routing, so that callers can press a button on their phones to identify their issue and then be directed to the best-qualified, available agent.

"Nonprofit organizations succeed in part because they are financially-conscious and responsible. Our Cisco Unified Communications solution provides a return on our investment."

— Jerry Garvey, Chief Financial Officer, Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center

BUSINESS RESULTS

Aunt Martha's has gained a competitive advantage with funders. "Our funders are impressed with our technological sophistication and are talking to us about expanding and adding programs," says Garvey. "Our understanding of network technology gives them confidence in our ability to execute." Another source of competitive advantage is that Aunt Martha can add voice services to new sites quickly, which helps the organization qualify for cash grants that require results within short time frames.

Telephony costs have dropped. "By transitioning to Cisco Unified Communications, we have already cut local- and long-distance costs by 20 percent despite adding ten offices," says Garvey.

The role of the IT staff has shifted from maintenance to enabling business goals. "Previously, people perceived the IT department's role with respect to the voice system as keeping the phones running," says Gebar. "Now we spend less time worrying about the technology and more time helping our clients meet their business goals."

The Cisco Unified Communications system has experienced no downtime. Staff members are confident in the reliability of IP telephony. “The reliability and ease of use of the new system quickly spread throughout the organization,” says Gebar. “After the first two Cisco Unified CallManager Express systems were deployed, other managers began clamoring for their own.”

Employee reaction has been very positive. “Staff are pleased that the organization is investing in their effectiveness by giving them updated equipment that is convenient to use and makes them more efficient,” says Garvey.

Cisco Unified Communications helps Aunt Martha’s meet regulatory requirements. The voice system takes advantage of the security technologies that Aunt Martha’s had already deployed for its data network. This helps it meet security requirements mandated by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

PRODUCT LIST
Routing and Switching
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cisco 2800 Series and 3800 Series Integrated Services Routers• Cisco Catalyst 3500 Series Switches with Power Over Ethernet• Cisco Catalyst 4500 Series Switches• Cisco Integrated Services Router
Security and VPN
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cisco PIX Firewalls• Cisco VPN Concentrator
Voice and IP Communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cisco Unified CallManager• Cisco Unified CallManager Express• Cisco Unified IP Phones• Cisco Unity Connection• Cisco Unified Contact Center Express

NEXT STEPS

Aunt Martha’s Youth Service Center plans to transition 10 to 15 sites each year to Cisco Unified Communications and expects the conversion to be complete by the summer of 2009. The next site to be transitioned, a back-up data center used for disaster recovery, will have redundant Cisco Unified CallManager servers and Cisco Unity Connection servers.

The IT group plans to begin using Cisco Unified Contact Center Express for the Aunt Martha’s health organization appointment center in addition to the IT help desk. Currently, if no agents are available, callers who want appointments are connected to the voicemail system. With Cisco Unified Contact Center Express, callers will be placed in a queue, informed how long they can expect to wait, and played an audio recording about new health services. Subsequently, the IT department will add integrated voice response and integrate with the customer relationship management software, so that agents can see the caller’s history as soon as they receive the call. Aunt Martha’s also plans to add a Cisco wireless network in a health center, so that healthcare providers can take advantage of mobility applications, including wireless IP phones.

“Nonprofit organizations succeed in part because they are financially-conscious and responsible,” says Garvey. “Our Cisco Unified Communications solution provides a return on our investment.”

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Corporate Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 526-4100

European Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: 31 0 20 357 1000
Fax: 31 0 20 357 1100

Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-7660
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
168 Robinson Road
#28-01 Capital Tower
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

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