

Insurance Company Virtualizes Data Center and Desktops

Cisco UCS Servers and UCS E-Series Servers transform Groupe Promutuel business operations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Groupe Promutuel



Industry: General insurance: auto, home, commercial and farm

Location: Headquartered in Québec City, Quebec; 150 field offices around the province

Network users: 2000 people locally and 2000 remote users

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Runaway HQ data center server costs to support continual expansion strain space, power, cooling budgets
- Different WAN configurations and server setups at 150 remote offices create IT support challenges and inflate operation costs
- Unreliable WAN bandwidth delivery and frequent server downtime stymie remote office employee productivity

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco Integrated Service Router Generation 2 (ISR G2) with Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) E-Series Servers and branch office VDI applications
- Cisco Nexus Switches and UCS servers at the data center power virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI)
- Simple, trouble-free remote site provisioning accelerates VDI deployment to all 150 sites

BUSINESS RESULTS

- 75 percent drop in branch office operating costs by eliminating ongoing server maintenance, upgrades and licensing, as well as facility costs
- Remote office provisioning reduced from hours to "a click of a mouse" thanks to consistent, single-management UI and centralized network policies
- Remote users and insurance agents in the field assured of reliable WAN connectivity and application performance

Business Challenges

Promutuel originated 160 years ago when farmers from Quebec had the innovative idea to band together and create their own insurance company. Today, the member-owned company sells automotive, residential, and commercial insurance, serving the needs of rural areas.

Promutuel's 150 field offices scattered around the large Eastern province range from single home offices to 100-person sites. A wide range of WAN technologies, applications and network environments in these offices produced a constant stream of challenges for Jamie Schofield, network architect for Promutuel, and the IT staff.

Two years ago, the IT team began with two simple questions to solve their problems:

1. "How can we build in computing power to support continual expansion while combating burgeoning footprint, power, cooling and costs?"
2. "How do we move from our labor-intensive, multiplatform, remote office enterprise network architecture to something more centralized, secure and reliable?"

Network Solution

With help from Cisco Systems, Promutuel's IT team developed a strong, two-pronged business case. Each plan was separate, but interdependent: the data center virtualization project laid the foundation for the desktop virtualization project that would ultimately generate the significant cost reductions and productivity gains for the entire company.

The IT team convinced Promutuel's 26 owner-members that an extensive network upgrade would bring sizable investment returns. The immediate and impressive results from the data center upgrade gave them the confidence to move forward with virtualizing desktops across the enterprise. Here is where Schofield had his own innovative idea: Could Citrix server accelerators be installed in Cisco remote office routers to slash his operation costs?

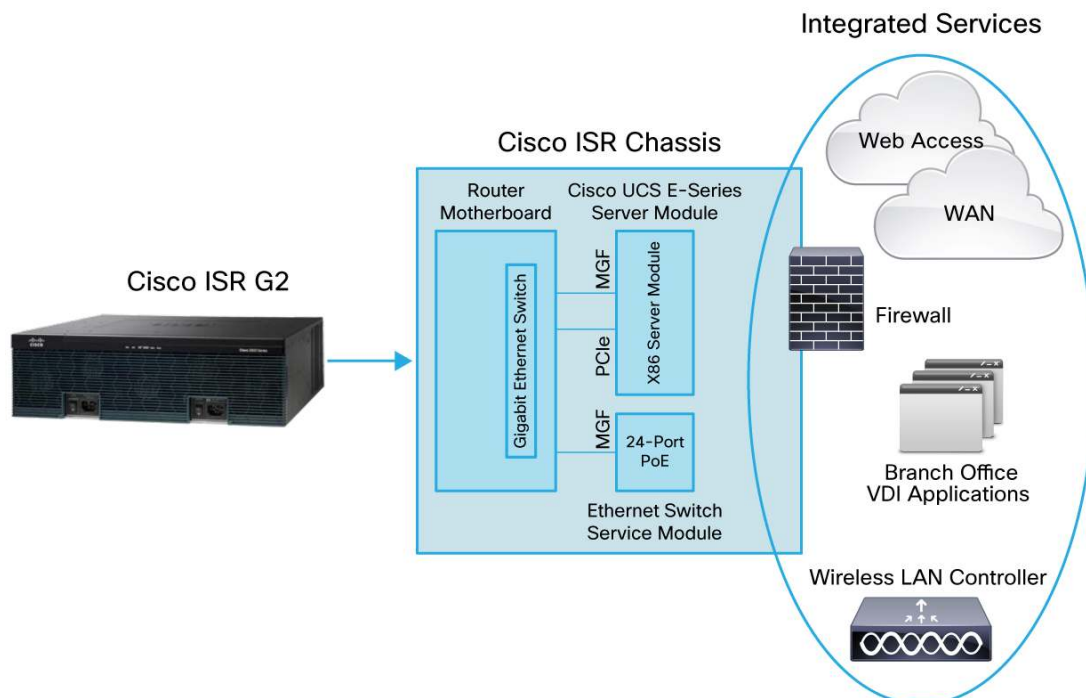
Schofield took his idea to his local Cisco engineering consultants (SEs) Martin Bolduc and Danny Blais. As it happened, Cisco design engineers were working on a virtual desktop integration (VDI) project, and Bolduc and Blais forwarded Promutuel's technical specifications to the product design team.

"Our desktop virtualization solution works. Thanks to Cisco ISR G2 branch routers with UCS E-Series Servers, Cisco has found a way to eliminate physical servers at our remote sites and support all the services we need now and in the future."

— Jamie Schofield, network architect for Promutuel

The Cisco® Integrated Services Routers Generation 2 (ISR G2) platform with embedded Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS) E-Series Server that Schofield eventually received amazed him and his staff. "Benchmark and proof of concept (PoC) results went far beyond what we asked for: the performance was remarkable, and the manageability and options were outstanding," says Schofield. Even Citrix's standalone product could not match the performance of the Cisco solution in a side-by-side comparison "bake-off."

Schofield discovered that the value of reliable, secure Cisco ISR G2s lies in the way they support a wide array of IT services in addition to routing: services such as IP PBX (unified communications), PSTN connectivity, WAN acceleration, Network Address Translation (NAT), firewall security, Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP), and now VDI.



Cisco UCS E-Series Servers with branch office VDI applications enable Schofield and his staff to virtualize multiple applications and services in one box at branch offices. Once more, the Cisco ISR G2s take advantage of the intelligent capabilities of the network to improve cloud services and application delivery and boost performance by dynamically responding to changing conditions to deliver an optimum end-user experience.

Business Results

The data center virtualization has been operational for over year, while desktop virtualization transformation is well under way. Over half the branch router units have already been deployed in field offices; ultimately, every one of Promutuel's 150 field offices will have a VDI solution with Cisco ISR G2 and UCS E-Series Server.

Data Center Virtualization Business Benefits

The virtual data center solution allowed Schofield and the IT staff to standardize applications and platforms across the network to significantly improve performance, security, availability, and the user experience.

Major benefits include:

- 300 percent gain in storage and scalability. With all applications and data residing at headquarters, Schofield and his IT staff have a much better handle on companywide data characterization and capacity needs.
- 100 percent improvement in footprint and power savings. "By migrating to Cisco UCS servers, we were able to remove all our rack-mount servers and reuse that footprint," says Schofield.
- 50 percent gain in support time as the IT staff unified system processes and configuration. Centralizing servers has produced better reliability across the enterprise as well.
- 200 percent savings in network software and hardware purchase and support costs by eliminating hundreds of servers across the company.
- 200 percent improvement in network performance. With less cabling, servers and configurations to negotiate, the network is much more streamlined.

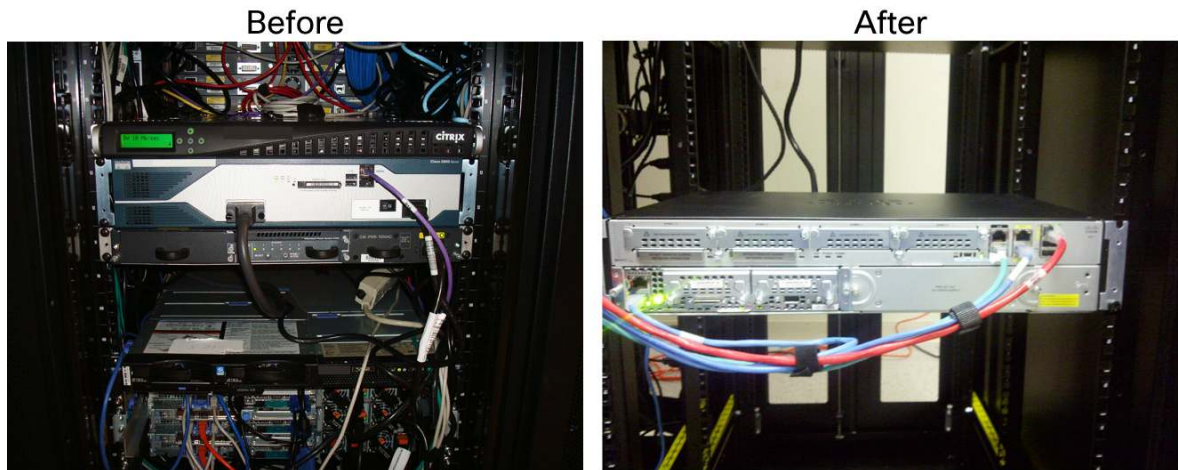
Branch Office Virtualization Business Benefits

Says Schofield, "Our desktop virtualization solution works. Thanks to Cisco ISR G2 branch routers with UCS E-Series Servers, Cisco has found a way to eliminate physical servers at our remote sites and support all the services we need now and in the future."

The Promutuel IT operations team has replaced server cabinets of up to 42 units with a single ISR G2 router. As a result, the company is realizing a 75 percent reduction in overall operation costs across the network; larger offices see even more savings, which include:

- 50 percent reduction in IT support because all server maintenance and backup, software upgrades, and contracts costs for each office are eliminated. "We went from a very complicated operational structure, managing different systems and servers, to deploying one box with a single consistent management interface," says Schofield.
- 84 percent reduction physical space and energy savings (from 2500 watts to 400 watts).
- 95 percent reduction in remote site setup. Schofield says, "System provisioning went from hours to minutes and a simple click of a mouse."
- 50 percent reduction in trouble ticket resolution time, thanks to the stability and reliability of the solution.

- 100 percent reduction in downtime. “The majority of our downtime stemmed from server crashes and WAN outages, but in the six months since this solution as been in operation, we have had no issues,” says Schofield.



With Cisco's single-solution approach, all Promutel offices, regardless of size, will enjoy the same level of WAN performance, access and reliability. Agents and office staff can now count on stable, smooth and secure IP connections as they sell stability and security policies to their customers. Schofield says, “We see no variation in WAN performance throughout the day; application and data access and delivery are rock solid.”

With server crashes and WAN downtime problems eliminated, the IT staff can concentrate on proactive tasks such as developing and deploying new applications for their users.

The operations team also found that with their Cisco solution they did not have to upgrade the platform every few weeks as they do with other vendors. Schofield says, “Cisco has demonstrated to us time and again that when they ship a product, they are sure about it. The only time we need to upgrade is when we need more functionality.”

The branch office and data center upgrades have been a real success for us,” he says. “In fact the projects have been so successful that we’re looking to deploy other services.”

Schofield sums up his experience by saying, “We’ve been really surprised by Cisco: they listened to us and our ideas and needs, and they came back with a solution that solved our problems. And, it’s been real business changer.”

PRODUCT LIST	
Data Center	
• Cisco UCS servers	
• Cisco Nexus 2000 and Nexus 7000 Series switches	
Branch Office	
• Cisco ISR G2s with Cisco UCS E-Series Servers	
• Cisco UCS E-Series Servers with branch office VDI applications	
• Microsoft Windows 7	

For More Information

- To learn more about Cisco UCS E-Series Servers, go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/ucse>.
- To learn more about Cisco Nexus Series switches for the data center, go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/nexus>.
- To learn more about Cisco ISR G2s, go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/isrg2>.
- To learn more about Cisco UCS servers for the data center,

go to <http://www.cisco.com/go/ucs>.



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