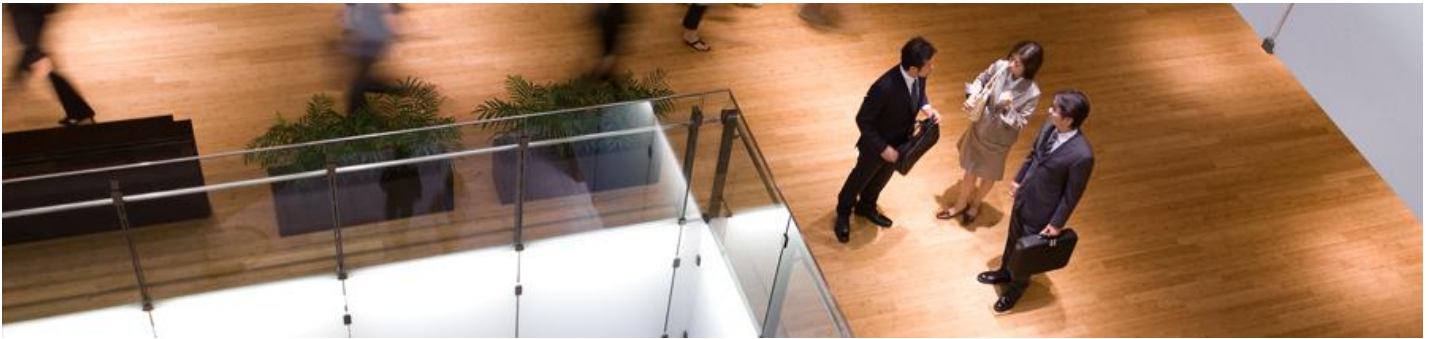


# INX/VocalMash



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INX/VocalMash

- Cisco Master Unified Communications Partner
- Headquarters in Houston, Texas
- 15 outside offices

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Improve internal collaboration between departments
- Gain higher level of technology understanding
- Build business cases to sell customers

## NETWORK SOLUTION

- Deploy Cisco Quad to enable employees to experience capabilities firsthand
- Build out a collaborative workspace that integrates social tools, unified communications, document and content management, and business/transactional systems
- Create and document framework that allows future enhancements

## BUSINESS RESULTS

- Developed a new solution for healthcare client in one week, by leveraging and consolidating efforts across multiple functions
- Built use case focused on orientation of employees brought into an organization through mergers and/or acquisitions
- Extended social collaboration across the entire enterprise; Employees now seek information/expertise within the company beyond those colleagues they know personally

## INX Experiences The Value of Pervasive Collaboration

INX/VocalMash improves collaboration between departments and delivers integrated experiences with Cisco Quad.

### Challenge

As a specialist in Web 2.0 services for large and small organizations, VocalMash is very much in tune with the need for collaboration. A subsidiary of INX, a Cisco® Master Unified Communications (UC) partner, VocalMash enables companies to rapidly integrate business data with the Cisco UC Solution. As an organization, INX aspires to be bigger than the technology alone, acting instead as an agent of change and innovation. One of its distinguishing characteristics is its client engagement framework that is designed to limit the risks associated with adopting advanced technology architecture while enhancing the business impact. The Houston, Texas-based company has 16 offices around the United States, making collaboration an essential component of its day-to-day business.

Although VocalMash was already using several collaboration applications, the applications were just a collection of applications that served individual purposes. In addition, the collaboration that those applications allowed was strictly vertical within departments. When a team was working on something new and significant, they would only share it within that team. Other teams learned about it only after it was finished. This isolated way of working had severe limitations.

*"Because we knew what was in the works, rather than having to wait for finished products, we were able to win a very nice piece of business and demonstrate our value to the customer," says Taguchi.*

"We might have a sales team that was looking for a solution to a particular problem and an engineering team that was working on that solution," says Rod Taguchi, director of VocalMash. "Yet engineering wasn't aware of the need, and sales teams weren't aware a possible solution was already in development."

Taguchi received a developmental copy of the new Cisco Quad™ collaboration platform in early 2010 and thought it might offer some innovative solutions for both his own staff and for customers. Cisco Quad is unique in that it integrates into a single platform and a single workspace the four basic areas knowledge workers normally move between: social tools (wikis, blogs, communities, etc.), unified communications, document management/storage, and business processes such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), or

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contact center tools. As a result, it provides context for all the information being exchanged, giving knowledge workers the larger context rather than just pieces of it.

“Technology analysts and the business press have talked about the ideal for collaboration for years,” Taguchi says. “It seemed like Cisco Quad might finally deliver on the promise, but we thought first having the product in front of us and trying it in our own organization would help us determine what the business use cases are for customers. We also knew it would be a lot more powerful if our salespeople could speak from actual, personal experience with the product, rather than simply parroting the sales literature. This is a premium solution and very new ground. What better way to prove its value than to use it ourselves?”

## Solution

Although Taguchi and the VocalMash team were anxious to put Cisco Quad through a thorough trial, they realized immediately that a lot of planning was required upfront. They determined the first step was to put themselves through their own client engagement framework.

“We took some time to determine how it would work and what the business value might be,” Taguchi says. “We wanted to see the big benefits, and how it would affect interaction between teams as well as within them. We started by looking at personal productivity, enterprise portals, that sort of thing, but our viewpoint changed as we learned more about Cisco Quad. We began thinking even bigger.”

This change in thinking became evident in the team and the organizational viewpoint that they began to apply. Rather than focusing on the individual, the company developed use cases for HR, employee orientation, engineering team and cross-team communication, acquisitions, and more.

VocalMash built all four elements into their solution, and team members use all four in their jobs every day. The collaboration that it creates is very much like another, actual quad.

*“In most organizations, you have a few people you know, and they’re your go-to’s on various topics,” Taguchi says. “They’re the ones whose ‘presence’ you will look for, and they’re the ones you feel comfortable contacting. Cisco Quad helps you expand that to everyone within the company. It’s not just a technology change; it’s really a culture change.”*

“The quad is the center of a college campus, a place where students from different disciplines often meet up to share experiences and ideas,” Taguchi says. “The Cisco Quad workspace serves a similar function. It’s a place where employees from every department from all over the country can meet, communicate, share ideas, and learn more about the work others are doing, without the laborious efforts usually required for any of those activities.”

## Results

The concept for Cisco Quad made sense in theory, but seeing it in action was still enlightening for Taguchi and his team. The value became apparent immediately.

“We had been using various collaboration tools before and understood the value,” he says. “But we never really thought about taking all those individual pieces and rolling them up into a single collaboration platform. That’s what Cisco has done. You have the presence piece, IM, message threads, document management, and everything else you need with the communication built right in, and it’s easy for users to move from one piece to the next.”

Still, VocalMash realized that, as useful as Cisco Quad was at the individual level, the only way they would be able to sell it in to an enterprise was to show executives and other business leaders the value that it brings at the team, departmental, or



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organizational levels. That's where the business use cases came in. After all, as Taguchi says, enterprises do not take converting to an entirely new communications platform lightly.

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### **Simplifies orientation after an acquisition**

One of the business use cases that VocalMash developed was for orienting new employees after an acquisition. In addition to encompassing outside social media tools, Cisco Quad is designed to facilitate the creation of enterprise-specific communities. Within these communities are mentors and experts who can help others find the information they need, whether it is which form to use, where to go for data on a product, or how certain tools and technologies work, etc.

In an orientation situation, there are usually a high number of touch-points in the first two months as the enterprise attempts to absorb the new employees coming over from the acquired company. Cisco Quad makes it easier for mentors to work with those new employees initially, get them acclimated to the culture, and remain in touch with them beyond those first two months. It also makes it easier for the new employees to integrate more fully after that start-up period, because they have much greater visibility into the workings, and especially the people, within the organization. If they need a particular piece of knowledge, they can perform a search or hover over the "bios" of individuals to find the right resources quickly. As the culture changes or the tools change, Cisco Quad helps all employees adjust and learn quickly, delivering a faster return on those investments.

### **Practical application helps drive sale**

Although that business use case illustrates a very common HR need among enterprises, it was still theoretical. The value of Cisco Quad really demonstrated itself to VocalMash in an actual sales situation.

According to Taguchi, the company has many different teams, including some with specialties within larger groups. For example, the overall engineering team encompasses security, application development, virtualization, collaboration, and data management. Specialists are also within verticals such as healthcare, financial, and education.

"Normally all these teams work independently, with little to no awareness of what the others are doing," Taguchi says. "They will develop something, and when it's finished, they'll show it, so everyone else can benefit from it. But the downside of that method is a team may be trying to do something new, and they won't have any insight into what the others are developing until it's finished, which can be a lag-time of months."

Cisco Quad became a game-changer in that aspect. During the trial, one of VocalMash's salespeople was talking to a healthcare customer about some things that the customer could use that did not exist yet. Rather than submit the usual type of request, the salesperson entered a query in Cisco Quad that detailed the customer's needs.

"What he discovered was that different teams were already working on parts of those solutions," Taguchi says. "They were close to being completed, but they weren't finished yet. We were able to put together a cross-team solution with the concept in a presentable form in one week, which is absolutely amazing, especially when you



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consider we normally would've parked the request for the future rather than address it right away. Because we knew what was in the works, rather than having to wait for finished products, we were able to win a very nice piece of business and demonstrate our value to the customer."

*"Collaboration is no longer a concept, it's a movement," he says.*

*"There is so much institutional knowledge out there, and everyone wants to capture it. You have to get past the natural resistance to changing tools. Once you're over that hurdle, the benefits are huge. Cisco Quad creates such a powerful collaboration environment that it really helps drive adoption quickly."*

### **Makes information more accessible**

For VocalMash, Cisco Quad made a difference in both individual work and enterprise operations. Users like it, because they can customize their personal views themselves rather than having to submit a request and then wait for IT to get to it. They also like the fact that it gives them visibility into what everyone within their group, as well as across the enterprise, is talking about.

"If you know what you're looking for, you can find it," Taguchi says. "The tag cloud makes it easy to see the hot topics."

Users like the fact that they can send messages or requests for expertise, and receive answers right away. They also like that they do not have to personally know the experts to tap into their knowledge.

"In most organizations, you have a few people you know, and they're your go-to's on various topics," Taguchi says. "They're the ones whose 'presence' you will look for, and they're the ones you feel comfortable contacting. Cisco Quad helps you expand that to everyone within the company. It's not just a technology change; it's really a culture change."

Another issue that it solves is making documented information easily accessible. In a typical enterprise, a great deal of information is exchanged via email. After a few days, weeks, or months, that information usually gets lost. But Cisco Quad makes it easy to find that information, because it is posted in a group rather than exchanged through email. Employees have to change the way they work to some extent, but Taguchi says the transition was an easy one for VocalMash.

"We were very fortunate to have a strong executive sponsor who believed in the potential," he states. "That's important. It is a change in the way the company operates, so getting management on board is extremely important. The more it's used, the more value it creates."

After using it extensively, Taguchi is definitely a strong proponent of Cisco Quad.

"Collaboration is no longer a concept, it's a movement," he says. "There is so much institutional knowledge out there, and everyone wants to capture it. You have to get past the natural resistance to changing tools. Once you're over that hurdle, the benefits are huge. Cisco Quad creates such a powerful collaboration environment that it really helps drive adoption quickly."

### **For More Information**

To find out more about Cisco Quad, go to:

[www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps10668/index.html](http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps10668/index.html)

### **Product List**

- Cisco Quad

