Media Group Prepares to Simplify Acquisitions and Disaster Recovery with All-in-One Network Device

Halifax Media Group successfully tested the Cisco 4451-X ISR - a one-box solution for VPN, firewall, disaster recovery, and SIP connectivity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Halifax Media Group

Industry: Publishing

Location: Daytona Beach, Florida

Company Size: ~ 2560 Employees; 33 Locations

BUSINESS IMPACT

- Eliminated US$360,000 annually for secondary MPLS connections
- Enabled two-person networking team to support growing company
- Provided flexible connectivity between all sites
- Will simplify acquisitions by providing one-box solution for all network services

Business Challenge

Halifax Media Group consists of 33 newspapers and affiliated websites, published in five states in the Southeastern United States. Established in 2010, Halifax has grown by acquisition to 2560 employees in 33 offices - in less than three years. The company's growth strategy is to invest in media companies in strong markets that have close community ties.

"But growth by acquisition left us with a complex network environment that was very difficult to manage," says Chris Tillett, network administrator for Halifax Media Group. For instance, the two-person networking team had to manage five different firewall solutions. The disparate collection of routers and security devices also prevented the company from consolidating the various publishing, and editorial applications accumulated from acquisitions.

To sustain growth, Halifax needed a simple standardized way to connect new locations to the network. The company also sought a low-cost disaster recovery solution - an especially urgent requirement because hurricanes frequently strike company headquarters in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Solution and Results

Halifax Media Group achieved both goals - simplifying acquisitions and providing disaster recovery - by standardizing on Cisco® Integrated Services Routers (ISRs).

In the first phase of its network transformation, Halifax replaced the routers and firewalls in all offices with Cisco 2900 and 1900 Series ISRs. These routers provide connectivity, firewall, and intrusion prevention services. Larger offices have two routers, one each for MPLS connectivity and site-to-site connectivity using Cisco IOS® FlexVPN. Smaller sites have one router configured for FlexVPN, which saved the company approximately $360,000 annually by eliminating the secondary MPLS connections.

Now Halifax is preparing for the next phase of the transformation, implementing the Cisco 4451-X ISR at headquarters and larger offices. The company has successfully tested the new router for two use cases: acquisitions and disaster recovery.

"The Cisco 4451-X ISR is the perfect box to facilitate mergers and acquisitions," Tillett says. "We'll just ship the router to the new office and bring up firewall, MPLS connectivity, and FlexVPN services within 10 minutes. For sites that need a SIP [session initiation protocol] connection to the voice service provider, we'll add a CUBE [Cisco Unified Border Element] license."

> "By providing all network services in one box - firewall, VPN, and virtual machine mobility for disaster recovery - the Cisco 4451-X ISR will make it faster and easier for Halifax to continue our strategy of growth through acquisition."
> **— Chris Tillett, Network Administrator, Halifax Media Group**

Tillett also tested the Overlay Transport Virtualization (OTV) feature of the Cisco 4451-X ISR, which facilitates disaster recovery. In the test, Tillett used OTV and VMware software to move virtual machines within a simulated WAN environment very similar to the company's production environment. "The test demonstrated that the ability to move virtual machines between locations, without having to make other extensive changes, would help to provide business continuity in the event of a regional disaster," Tillett says.

Tillett concludes, "By providing all network services in one box - firewall, VPN, and virtual machine mobility for disaster recovery - the Cisco 4451-X ISR will make it faster and easier for Halifax to continue our strategy of growth through acquisition."

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco 4451-X Integrated Services Routers, visit: http://www.cisco.com/go/isr4451.

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