Call Center Deploys Virtual Blade Technology to Streamline Infrastructure

LiveOps improves server management and availability with Cisco Catalyst Blade Switches.

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<tr><td colspan="1">EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td></tr>
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LIVEOPS, INC.

- **Industry:** Call Center Technology
- **Location:** Santa Clara, California
- **Number of Employees:** 275

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Network availability was reaching its limits
- Existing blade switching solution was complex and required extensive training and re-training
- More space-effective environment was needed to lower operating expenses

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Upgrade to centralize server management, increase availability, and lower operating expenses

BUSINESS RESULTS

- High server availability, with room for future growth
- Hardware reduction, resulting in lower power consumption bills
- Lower operating expenses and cost of management by nearly half

Business Challenge

Headquartered in Santa Clara, California, LiveOps provides the leading on-demand call center platform that provides greater flexibility, quality, scalability, and control than traditional call center technology providers. Used by Fortune 500 and major brand marketing companies, the LiveOps on-demand call center platform delivers enterprise-grade availability and reliability with the security infrastructure required in today's mission-critical business environments. The company also utilizes its on-demand call center platform to operate the world's largest virtual call center which includes access to a network of more than 20,000 independent home agents.

LiveOps currently has two data centers and is in the progress of switching on a third one to support its continued growth. Each data center houses hundreds of services and are running several types of applications as well as monitoring tools including iNagios, MRGT and Splunk.

According to Roy Youngs, network manager for LiveOps, senior management made the decision to move to Cisco Switch Blade for better availability, ease of use and to reduce operating expenses by having a more "space effective" IT environment.

"Whether our customer is using our SaaS platform to run their own call center operations or they are outsourcing to the LiveOps Virtual Call Center, they want 100% uptime," says Youngs. "LiveOps IT infrastructure plays a major part in the caliber of service customers experience with our call center solution. SIP/RTP [Session Initiation Protocol/Routing Table Protocol] and NAT [Network Address Translation] traffic is crucial to our business so it is vital for us to have a highly available network with optimal performance. Better and faster performance is key for us too -- especially at peak call volume times."

Prior to adopting Cisco Blade Switch, the company was using a solution that was not achieving their desired performance outcome. Additionally, the management of the IT environment posed some challenges. Youngs reports, "It was complex and required an unduly amount of training and support."

> **"There is a very significant and identifiable return on investment in that these types of products from Cisco allow us to reduce our management time, the amount of time needed to invest in managing these products. Since upgrading to the Catalyst Blade Switches, we are expecting our management time to go down considerably."**
>
> **—Roy Youngs, Network Manager, LiveOps**

Solution

Youngs and his team decided to test the Cisco® Virtual Blade Switch (VBS) technology with the Cisco Catalyst® Blade Switch 3120X in a DNA lab.

"We bought the first Catalyst Blade Switches and deployed them into production almost immediately following our testing," says Youngs. "The 3120Xs have given us flexibility because we can use the converter to alter the amount of traffic flowing in the path. Having the ability to control traffic flow as business requires is a nice feature."

Also, Youngs notes the Catalyst Blade Switch 3120Xs' ability to monitor the amount and types of traffic flowing through the LiveOps network as a benefit.

"Our previous environment did not lend itself well to specific traffic identification and analytics, and that is one of the reasons why our next-generation environment has Network Analyst Module (NAM) so that we can analyze the flow," says Youngs. "At any given point in time, we have thousands of calls coming through our platform -- in addition to the web and backend server traffic. The 3120X Blade Switches allow us to process an increasing amount of traffic, meeting the requirements we have for the enterprise-grade scalability."

Ease of management, high availability, and redundancy in the event of system failures are also benefits of the Catalyst Blade Switch upgrade, notes Youngs.

"Our architecture goals is to be "5-9s" capable when it comes to availability so it is critical that we have extreme redundancy," says Youngs. "If we have an access-switch failure, we still need all our systems components to continue functioning without interruption."

Results

High Availability
"Any time our platform can't take calls, we are losing business. We need to have extreme redundancy for business continuity," said Youngs.

Reduced Operating Expenses
"Since upgrading to the Catalyst Blade Switches, we are seeing management time go down considerably. Also, reducing the physical number of servers we have to manage has meant we do not need as many resources as we would have with our previous IT environment," says Youngs.

Data Center Footprint Savings—Power, Cooling and Cabling Savings

"For space saving, if I were trying to get EtherChannel at the core and running four cables per switch back to the core, it would require a significant number of cables that would ultimately require a patch farm. With the ability to fit four of the Catalyst Blade Switches into a 42U rack, we are talking about incredible reduction in rack space and ultimately data center space. This in turn results in power and cooling savings as well."

Next Steps

Youngs says he will likely deploy several more Catalyst Blade Switch 3120Xs by the end of the year.

"We are pleased with the initial results we are seeing with the Catalyst Blade Switches and the support we are getting from Cisco. With the success of this deployment, we look forward to a continued partnership with the Catalyst Blade Switch team."

PRODUCT LIST
Cisco Application Networking Services: • Cisco Catalyst® Blade Switch 3120Xs

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Catalyst Blade Switches, please visit http://www.cisco.com.

Printed in USA

C36-503152-00   10/08