Software Developer Eliminates Office Space Entirely

Chorus uses unified communications and collaboration applications to enable all employees to work from home.

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<tr><td colspan="1">EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td></tr>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHORUS
- Software Developer
- New Jersey
- 60 employees

CHALLENGE
- Reduce costs
- Maintain excellent customer service

SOLUTION
- Provided a telework setup for all employees

RESULTS
- Eliminated US$400,000 in annual office space costs
- Resolved customers' technical support issues more quickly
- Increased employee satisfaction

Challenge

Established in 1995, Chorus provides practice management systems for community health centers. The company employs 60 people in Texas and New Jersey.

In early 2008, Chorus was leasing 15,000 square feet of office space in two buildings, far more space than required for expected growth. To reduce expenses, the chief executive officer asked the company's IT department to find a way for everyone to work from home. Not only would telework eliminate office space and utility costs, it would save employees the time, expense, and environmental impact of commuting and give them more time with their families.

In 2007, Chorus had begun using Cisco® Unified Communications for IP telephony, voicemail, and voice and web conferencing, and contact center. "We realized that we could take advantage of our existing Cisco network and Cisco Unified Communications applications to let all employees work from home," says Rick Boyd, vice president of infrastructure.

The challenge would be to make sure that customers received the same excellent service that they had when employees worked in the office.

Solution

Dynamic Strategies designed the telework solution to take advantage of Chorus' existing Cisco network and equipment. "The Cisco Unified Communications suite includes all of the technologies that Chorus needs for telework, including IP telephony, unified messaging, contact center, and VPN," says Joe Infante, managing partner, Dynamic Strategies. "An integrated solution is faster

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—Joe Infante, Managing Partner, Dynamic Strategies, Inc.

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Chorus uses Cisco Unified Contact Center Express for customer support calls, intelligently routing callers to the first available agent. Contact center agents use a Cisco Unified IP Phone 7961G and a Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance (ASA) at home. The Cisco ASA provides a secure connection to another router at the company data center, where the Cisco Unified Communications Manager server resides. The router-to-router connection provides the quality of service (QoS) to help ensure excellent voice quality. "We dedicate a certain amount of bandwidth to voice calls, so that quality remains consistent even if the employees' family members are using the Internet at the same time," says Infante.

Employees who spend less time on the phone use a laptop with Cisco VPN Client and Cisco IP Communicator software, which makes the PC work just like a Cisco Unified IP Phone.

Different departments take advantage of other Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration applications to do their work as if they were in the office:

- The Chorus IT group uses Cisco WebEx® Support Center to provide remote tech support to customers and employees. The support person can remotely control the caller's desktop to troubleshoot or demonstrate how to use the software.
- The company's business analysts use Cisco WebEx Meeting Center to demonstrate the company's software solutions to prospective customers.
- Departments use Cisco WebEx Meeting Center to conduct daily or weekly conference calls to share project status and challenges. The web collaboration feature lets employees share spreadsheets and other documents as if they were meeting in person.
- Quality Assurance team members use Cisco VPN Client software to test new software from home.
- The client services manager refers to the reports from Cisco Unified Contact Center Express to monitor agents' performance, including the number of calls answered, call duration, abandon rates, and more. He can coach agents by listening in, interrupting, and recording.

"With Cisco WebEx and Cisco Unity, we can do almost everything that we could if we worked together in the same building," Boyd says. "We can collaborate on a spreadsheet or a client presentation, or show someone how to bill."

Chorus also set up policies to help employees be successful working at home. For example, employees need a separate workspace and desk. And they are expected to work at their desks during normal business hours.

Results

Chorus met its goals for lower costs and outstanding customer service with a Cisco Unified Communications solution deployed by Dynamic Strategies, Inc., a Cisco Certified Premier Partner.

Cost Savings

The company is saving US$400,000 annually by closing its physical offices. Savings include the lease, electricity, and telecommunications lines.

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>
> **—Rick Boyd, Vice President of Infrastructure, Chorus**

Outstanding Customer Service

Chorus' customers do not even realize that employees are working from home. When they call the company's main number, they are prompted to enter an extension or press a number to connect to a department: customer support, infrastructure support, application development, or business analysts. For customer support, the call is routed to the first available agent. For other departments, the Cisco Unified Communications system rings every employee in the group, and the call goes to whoever answers first. If an agent is not immediately available, callers have the choice to wait or leave a message. Customer support employees become aware of messages right away because the message appears right in their email inbox, with Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging. After-hours calls are sent to the main customer support voice mailbox so that all employees in the group, including whoever is on call, receive the message as an email attachment.

Faster Case Resolution

"The number of open cases for customers and employees has decreased by 50 percent since we started working from home," says Boyd. "We attribute the greater productivity to better team communications. When you take the commute out of the day, people work longer but are happier." Boyd, for example, now checks email from home before he even gets his morning coffee. "My group used to have 60 to 100 open cases at any time," Boyd says. "Since we began telecommuting, I haven't seen more than 20."

Increased Employee Satisfaction

Employees appreciate being able to spend more time at home, and happier employees tend to be more productive, according to Boyd. "Think what you could do if you could take back two hours a day that you used to spend commuting," he says. Some employees are saving money, as well, in transportation costs and in some cases, auto insurance premiums. Boyd himself saves US$500 monthly on his commute.

Next Steps

Chorus plans to enhance its telework program in the following ways:

- Providing presence information, so that employees can see whether their coworkers are available and how they prefer to be reached, even before taking the time to dial.
- Providing a telework setup for new employees after completing the acquisition of a Florida-based firm. Chorus will deploy new Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unified Contact Center servers in Florida.

- Providing Cisco IP Communicator to developers who work in India. Currently, these developers need to find an available phone before they can talk with someone in the United States.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications go to:
http://www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications.

PRODUCT LIST

Switching and Routing
- Cisco Router 3845 in the data center
- Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance 5505 in employees' home offices

Unified Communications
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7961G
- Cisco Unity
- Cisco IP Communicator
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express

Collaboration
- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center and Support Center

Security
- Cisco PIX 515 Security Appliance
- Cisco VPN Client

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