

Cisco Unified Communications Solutions Partner Gains a Competitive Advantage

Nexus employees collaborate across time and distance barriers with Cisco Unified Communications and WebEx, and meet virtually with TelePresence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
NEXUS IS, INC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco UC Solutions Partner • Valencia, California • 375 employees
CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain a competitive advantage • Enable collaboration across nine locations • Reduce costs
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded to Cisco Unified Communications 7.0 • Used Cisco Unified Workspace for Partners with Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription, for predictable pricing • Deployed Cisco WebEx and Cisco TelePresence
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled employees to communicate with each other more quickly • Enabled experts in any location to meet with customers without travel • Saved \$31,217 from travel avoidance, in five months • Saved 1830 hours of engineers' time worth US\$76,400 in five months

Challenge

Nexus is a Cisco Unified Communications Solutions Partner with headquarters in Valencia, California and eight other offices in California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. The company provides solutions for unified communications, collaboration, data center, contact centers, mobility, highly available data networking, data protection, and managed services. Nexus has strategic partnerships with information technology leaders and is a Cisco® Gold Certified Partner with a Masters Certification in Unified Communications.

Nexus has an advantage in the highly competitive value-added reseller (VAR) industry because of the depth and breadth of its 170-member technical team, distributed across the company's nine locations. The challenge is enabling engineers with a specific type of expertise to meet with customers in other locations without the time and costs of travel. "For Nexus to compete against firms that have all of their expert resources in a single location, our employees need to be able to collaborate across time and distance barriers as if they all worked in the same office," says Steve Reese, Director of Solutions Marketing, Nexus.

Solution

Nexus employees in any workspace can now collaborate readily, using Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration tools. The company began using Cisco Unified Communications in 2004 and upgraded to Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0 in 2008. "We completed the cut-over in five days, with no service outage," says Reese.

"Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription is a big advantage, because I don't have to continually ask executives to increase the budget for software upgrades. We can count on fixed costs for three years."

—Amy Smith, Unified Communications Practice Manager, Nexus

Most employees use Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, a desktop application for PC or Mac that provides a unified interface for voice, instant messaging, presence, voice messaging, click to call, video, conferencing, corporate directory, and call history. The company takes advantage of Cisco Unified Workspace for Partners to access applications in the Cisco Unified Communications suite at a per-user price point. "In the past, if I needed to add a user for a given application, I had to first find another user who didn't use that application so I could use the license,"

says Amy Smith, Unified Communications Practice Manager, Nexus. The licensing solution includes Technical Assistance Center support as well as Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription, which provides major software upgrades for three years at no additional cost. "Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription is a big advantage because I don't have to continually ask executives to increase the budget for software upgrades," Smith says. "We can count on fixed costs for three years."

Nexus prefers to lease because of its large technology investment, and takes advantage of flexible financing options from Cisco Capital.

Conferencing

Nexus conducts internal meetings with employees in different offices using Cisco Unified MeetingPlace®, which enables voice, video, and web collaboration over the company's wide-area network. "If we're chatting with instant messaging and realize we need to talk, we can just click a button to initiate a phone call," says Smith. "And if we then want to add video or share documents, we just click again to escalate to a Cisco Unified MeetingPlace conference." Smith used Cisco Unified MeetingPlace to train employees on the new features of Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0, using video, surveys, and polling to make the training interactive and interesting. The company recorded the training session so that new employees can watch a video on demand. Smith also uses Cisco Unified MeetingPlace for troubleshooting with employees' applications. The web collaboration feature lets her see the employee's desktop to identify and resolve the issue.

For customer meetings, Nexus sales and engineering personnel uses Cisco WebEx to share presentations and documents, and Cisco Unified MeetingPlace for the voice connection.

Unified Messaging

Employees save time by using Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging to play back and manage voicemail from their email inbox. Features in Cisco Unity Unified Messaging 7.0 help employees more quickly respond to requests from co-workers and customers. For example, if the connection drops when employees are listening to voicemail from a mobile phone, they can use dropped call recovery to call back in and listen to the message where they left off. Employees also like the message monitor feature, which lets them listen to voicemail messages as they are being left. "If a manager is having a routine meeting and hears that the message is from a customer with an urgent issue, the manager has the option to accept the call," Reese says. Employees also like the new ability to scroll through visual voicemail messages on their Cisco Unified IP phone display. "Now I can check voicemail even before my PC boots up," says Reese. "Even small time savings every day add up over time."

Cisco TelePresence

Nexus uses Cisco TelePresence™ for weekly departmental meetings, customer meetings, and employee interviews. Customers are enthusiastic about Nexus' Connect to an Expert service, which uses Cisco TelePresence to let them come to the nearest Nexus office to meet face-to-face with an expert in any location. "Cisco TelePresence and our Connect to an Expert program have helped us close new business by bringing in subject matter experts from different locations to understand our customers' needs," Reese says. "And every meeting that an engineer conducts with Cisco TelePresence instead of an airplane trip frees up three or four hours to spend in the field. That enables us to compete with companies whose resources are all in one office."

Mobility

Employees who travel appreciate MobileConnect, a single-number reach application that allows them to answer incoming calls on either the desktop phone or mobile phone, change over to the other phone without losing the connection, and originate enterprise calls from the cellular phone. "MobileConnect saves a tremendous amount of time every day by letting employees dial a single number instead of having to track someone down," says Smith.

New Cisco Unified Mobility features in Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0 make it easier for Nexus employees to collaborate across the barriers of time and distance. The new time-of-day routing feature makes MobileConnect single number reach feature even more convenient. “Vendors in other time zones sometimes call at 5:00 a.m. my time,” says Reese. “Now I can easily set up the system to only send calls to my mobile phone when I want to receive them.”

Contact Center

Nexus uses Cisco Unified Contact Center as the foundation for customer interactions, routing calls to the right resource, the first time. This has helped Nexus earn 4.5 of 5 possible points for customer service in its customer satisfaction surveys.

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—Steve Reese, Director of Solutions, Nexus

Results

Competitive Advantage

“In general, businesses focus either on growth or cost control, but not simultaneously,” says Reese. “Cisco Unified Communications technology has helped make Nexus the exception. We have grown 25 percent year over year for the past four years while remaining profitable.” Nexus attributes this accomplishment to the use of technology. “Employees in any workspace can quickly reach out to each other, and our experts can meet face-to-face with customers using Cisco TelePresence,” says Reese. “That makes us as nimble as a small, local VAR even though we’re spread out in nine markets.”

Travel Avoidance

From March to July 2008, Nexus employees conducted 172 scheduled Cisco TelePresence sessions with customers and 786 spontaneous sessions. In those five months, the company saved more than US\$108,000, including travel costs and time savings. Travel costs amounted to more than US\$30,000, but the time savings have an even greater business impact. “In just five months, Cisco TelePresence saved 1830 hours for sales that otherwise would have been spent traveling,” says Reese. “That’s worth US\$76,400 in salary alone.” One of Nexus’ solution experts who works out of the San Diego, California office has met with up to half a dozen customers throughout the country in one day, compared to a maximum of two when he had to travel.

Faster Decision-Making

Nexus employees can get answers faster because of presence technology, which displays whether co-workers are available and how they prefer to be reached. “In the past, if I was on a conference call and an employee left a voicemail message with a customer pricing question, I wouldn’t hear the request for an hour or more,” says Smith. “Now they see from my presence information that I’m on the phone, and can send an instant message for an immediate response.” This can result in extra sales if a sales representative can find an answer while on the phone with the customer. Presence and instant messaging capabilities in Cisco Unified Personal Communicator can even prevent loss of revenue because customers who have to wait for a call back might use the time to find another source.

Employee Satisfaction

Nexus employees appreciate not having to travel as much. "Cisco Unified Personal Communicator enables us to collaborate from home as if we were in the office, and with MobileConnect we can receive calls on our cell phones without giving our personal cell phone numbers," says Reese. The option to work from home helps Nexus attract and retain skilled employees.

Reduced Carbon Footprint

Cisco TelePresence, Cisco Unified MeetingPlace, and Cisco WebEx reduce air travel, lowering Nexus' carbon footprint.

Next Steps

As its customers begin upgrading to Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0, Nexus plans to adopt federated presence, so that employees in both companies can share presence information and securely send instant messages.

Nexus also plans to take advantage of the open interfaces of Cisco Unified Communications solutions to add more functions to the applications. One idea is to develop widgets for Cisco WebEx so that employees can just click to launch business applications, such as scheduling meetings with people in different companies. The company also plans to use the Cisco Unified Application Environment to develop applications that employees can operate by pressing buttons on their Cisco Unified IP phones.

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 Catalyst 6500 and 3560 Switches
- Cisco Integrated Services Routers

Cisco Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager 7.0
- Cisco Unified IP Phones Models 7912G, 7940G, 7941G, 7960G, 7961G, 7970G, 7971G
- Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones Models 7920, 7921G
- Cisco Unified IP Conference Station 7935G
- Cisco Unity 7.0
- Cisco Unified Presence Server 7.0
- Cisco Unified Personal Communicator 7.0
- Cisco Unified Workspace for Partners
- Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription
- Cisco Unified MeetingPlace
- Cisco Unified Mobility
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise 7.5
- Cisco IP IVR 5.0

Collaboration

- Cisco WebEx
- Cisco Digital Media System
- Cisco TelePresence

Security

- Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance 5520
- Cisco Network Admissions Control
- Cisco Security Monitoring, Analysis, and Response System
- Cisco Intrusion Prevention System



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