

General Contractor Enables Global Teams to Collaborate

MODEC, Inc deployed Unified Communications and Unified MeetingPlace to accelerate decision-making, improve productivity, and reduce costs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MODEC, INC

- Oil Field Services
- Houston, Texas
- 1800 employees and full-time contractors

CHALLENGE

- Scale the business
- Enable collaboration among a global workforce
- Increase productivity and responsiveness
- Reduce costs

SOLUTION

- Refreshed wired and wireless networks in each office, using global standards
- Implemented Cisco Unified Communications Manager in each office
- Adopted Cisco Unified MeetingPlace for voice and web collaboration

RESULTS

- Shortened time to make everyday decisions from 24 hours to 15 minutes
- Compressed time to complete engineering drawings from three to eight weeks to one to two days
- Reduced international telephone bills by US\$15,000 monthly meetings

Challenge

MODEC, Inc. is a general contractor specializing in engineering, procurement, construction, and installation of floating production systems for oil and gas. The company has three main offices, in Tokyo, Japan, Houston, Texas, and Singapore, as well as 10 regional offices.

In 2004, MODEC launched a strategic initiative to become one of the two largest providers in the industry. At the time, MODEC worked on just one or two projects at a time to earn US\$500 million annually. Projects typically lasted 18 to 36 months. Even adding one more project a year would nearly double revenue.

The company grew even faster than anticipated, winning four new contracts in just 60 days. "Our headcount increased from 310 to 850 in seven months," says Ed Flavin, chief information officer. "To serve more employees working on more projects, we needed a highly reliable network infrastructure."

MODEC also wanted to introduce collaboration tools that would increase productivity. In the past, if an employee emailed a question to a colleague in another time zone, the response might not arrive until the next day. "In global organizations, making a decision can easily take 24 hours instead of 12," says Flavin. "We wanted to become more dynamic."

Time barriers in the global company affected engineers' productivity, as well. Teams of engineers in different countries would mark up a drawing and then email a scanned copy to team members. Finalizing a drawing might take 8 to 12 cycles over three to eight weeks, according to Flavin. "Shortening time to approval would enable us to complete more work in less time," he says.

Solution

MODEC achieved its goals with a Cisco® network platform and Cisco Unified Communications solutions. First, the company refreshed its wired and wireless networks in all locations, over 1.5 years. "We chose Cisco network solutions because they are reliable and secure," says Flavin. "We can install them and then move on to another project instead of worrying whether they are going to break. We also don't need to worry about interoperability, as we would if we had purchased the best products from multiple vendors."

MODEC established standard configurations for offices of different sizes, following Cisco best practices. Employees who work on floating platforms enjoy the same wired and wireless voice and data services as employees in land offices, delivered over a satellite link. Approximately 30 percent of employees are mobile within the office, so MODEC implemented a pervasive wireless network that supports voice as well as data. Accudata Systems, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner, implemented the wired and wireless networks in all global locations.

Cisco Unified Communications

With its network infrastructure in place, MODEC engaged Accudata to add Cisco Unified Communications. Employees can dial a five-digit extension to reach coworkers in any global office. Employees who are mobile within the building, like IT staff and expeditors, can be reached wherever they are on their usual extension, with Cisco Wireless Unified IP phones. Employees who leave the building or expect calls after hours can forward calls to their mobile phone or home phone. And if employees want to join an international conference call early in the morning or late at night, they no longer have to drive to the office. Instead, they use Cisco IP Communicator on their laptops to join the call from home, over a secure VPN connection.

What's more, teams of engineers in any location can now collaborate on drawings at the same time, using Cisco Unified MeetingPlace® for voice and web conferencing. All team members can view the drawing at the same time from their web browsers. Someone who makes a change can share the desktop with others to get immediate feedback.

“A global team that needs to decide whether to issue a purchase order can do it during a 15-minute phone call instead of a 24-hour email exchange.”

—Ed Flavin, Chief Information Officer, MODEC, Inc.

Results

MODEC is meeting its goals for responsiveness, enhanced collaboration, and cost savings.

Increased Responsiveness and Productivity

The company can now respond more quickly to opportunities or project challenges because employees are easier to reach. “If we’re expecting an international call, we no longer have to sit in our office or incur high international mobile calling charges,” Flavin says. “We just dial each other’s office extension, and the call is forwarded to any number, including our cell phone or home phone. A global team that needs to decide whether to issue a purchase order can do it during a 15-minute phone call instead of a 24-hour email exchange.” And if the call is forwarded to the employee’s mobile phone, MODEC is billed for a domestic rather than an international call.

Employees save more time using Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging, which allows them to manage email and voicemail messages in one place, the email inbox. “Employees who are out of the office can see their office voicemail messages in their smartphone email box, and just click to play them back in any order, or forward them,” says Flavin says. “This, too, helps us be more responsive.”

“Now that we can share engineering drawings using Cisco Unified MeetingPlace, we can finalize plans during a day-long meeting instead of emailing files over three to eight weeks. We save tens of thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars in labor costs during a typical two-year project. Sometimes the greatest ideas are the simplest.”

—Ed Flavin, Chief Information Officer, MODEC, Inc.

Engineering Collaboration

Instead of spending weeks emailing marked-up drawings, engineering teams can now collaborate in real time, with voice and web conferencing. “Now that we can share engineering drawings using Cisco Unified MeetingPlace, we can finalize plans during a day-long meeting instead of emailing files over three to eight weeks,” says Flavin. “We

save tens of thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars in labor costs during a typical two-year project. Sometimes the greatest ideas are the simplest.”

Cost Savings

Savings on labor and international mobile calling paid for the Cisco Unified Communications solution in less than two years. “It’s the single smartest IT investment we’ve ever made,” Flavin says. With Cisco Unified Communications Manager, international mobile phone charges decreased from \$40,000 to \$15,000 monthly. And more efficient collaboration saves labor costs, hundreds of thousands of dollars during a typical two-year project. “Labor represents 70 percent of our costs, so the faster we get things done, the more profitable we are,” says Flavin. “By helping people make decisions faster, Cisco Unified Communications enables us to be more effective, meet aggressive timelines, and increase profits.”

Enhanced Quality of Life

Employees appreciate not having to drive to the office for early morning or late night conference calls. Instead, they can join Cisco Unified MeetingPlace conferences from home, using Cisco IP Communicator. Reducing trips also lowers the company’s carbon footprint.

Next Steps

Now that the Cisco Unified Communications infrastructure is in place, MODEC can use it for other Cisco Unified Communications applications. Two under consideration are desktop video conferencing and Cisco TelePresence™.

PRODUCT LIST

Switches and Routers

- Cisco Catalyst® Switches 4500, 3600, and 2600
- Cisco Integrated Services Routers 3845, 2851, and 2821

Cisco Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7911G, 7961GE, 7965G, 7971G-GE, 7975G
- Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones 7921G
- Cisco Unified IP Conference Station 7936, 7937
- Cisco Unified IP Phone Expansion Module 7914
- Cisco IP Communicator
- Cisco Unity Unified Messaging
- Cisco Unified MeetingPlace

Security

- Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance 5500
- Cisco VPN Client software

Technical Implementation

Accudata deployed Cisco Unified Communications Manager in each office. Cisco Unified MeetingPlace servers are deployed in Houston, Singapore, and Tokyo. Employees in other offices dial into the nearest hub.

MODEC’s global offices connect over a Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) VPN. “MPLS simplifies maintenance because we don’t need to reconfigure all our systems whenever we add a new site,” Flavin says. “We also need less bandwidth, because MPLS eliminates the need for dedicated connections between offices, which are not cost effective for offices that rarely communicate.”

To help ensure that all global Cisco Unified Communications solutions are configured consistently, MODEC centrally manages upgrades and patches from Houston, with just one full-time and one half-time employee. An IT staff member in each office manages voicemail accounts and phone configurations.

For More Information

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



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
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