

Commercial Real Estate Leader Builds Sales and Profitability

CresaPartners supports multitasking sales force with rich phone features powered by Cisco network.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CRESAPARTNERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry: Commercial Real Estate Location: Norwalk, CT
CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower dynamic sales force with intelligent, easy-to-use phone, conferencing, and voice messaging system Make sales calls more efficient, and deliver responsive customer service Improve collaboration
RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified Communications Solution speeds sales calls and teleconferences, saving one hour per day per employee
SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart Business Communications System (SBCS), featuring Cisco Unified Communications 500 and Cisco Unified CallConnector Bring together desktop applications, powerful messaging, and sophisticated phone features in one easy-to-use platform



Challenge

Since its founding, CresaPartners has focused on serving the best interests of commercial real estate tenants. The firm offers a wide range of integrated services, including strategic planning, relocation management and planning, facilities management, transaction management, and lease administration. These services are developed and implemented to give clients the full advantage of the company's expertise, discipline, and judgment.

CresaPartners depends on its experienced staff of brokers to reach out to prospective clients and market its services. Most of the firm's sales calls are done over the phone, so telecommunications and messaging play a vital role in keeping CresaPartners profitable.

"We sell services every day, so we are on the phone constantly," says Jeffrey Gage, managing principal at the CresaPartners Norwalk office. "Our task is to canvas businesses in Fairfield and Westchester County, identify the decision makers at their office locations, and differentiate ourselves to prospects who may be renewing a lease or relocating their businesses."

As CresaPartners prepared to open its new office in Norwalk, Connecticut, the firm saw an opportunity to boost the productivity and efficiency of its small staff of brokers by making phone communications faster and smarter. CresaPartners needed an intelligent, easy-to-use phone system that would enable its staff to conduct sales calls quickly, using their familiar Microsoft Outlook contact tools.

To support a highly mobile workforce, the new solution would need to deliver rich voice messaging and support phone communication inside and outside the office. Since CresaPartners brokers frequently negotiate with multiple parties over the phone, the solution would also have to enable teleconferencing at a moment's notice.

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—Jeffrey Gage, Managing Principal, CresaPartners, Norwalk, CT

Results

To give its brokers the communications tools and features that they needed, CresaPartners outfitted its Norwalk office with the Cisco® Smart Business Communications System, which delivers secure data, voice, and wireless communication on one network. CresaPartners also utilizes Cisco Unified CallConnector for Microsoft Windows to tie its phone system with the familiar applications that brokers use every day.

“One of the things that our brokers like is the ability to have everything at their desktop,” says Gage. “Cisco Unified CallConnector makes it easy for our brokers to reach out to their Microsoft Outlook contacts. Instead of spending time tracking down a client’s information, then manually dialing each phone number, a broker can connect to a contact with a click of the mouse. This feature saves us an hour a day per employee.”

The Cisco solution’s close integration with Microsoft Outlook also saves employees time in setting up impromptu teleconferences.

“The ability to simply open your contacts list, pick up whoever you need, and assemble a conference call by pointing and clicking is extremely beneficial,” says Gage. “I have been on calls where we are negotiating deals involving multiple parties. If someone calls in on another line and needs to be involved, I can see who is calling on my screen and immediately patch that person in to participate. It saves us a tremendous amount of time trading calls back and forth.”

The Cisco solution also provides powerful call-handling features that make it easy for employees to prioritize communication, so they can be more responsive to clients.

“In some situations we might be on a phone conference for three hours straight, negotiating a lease with attorneys and principals,” says Gage. “I might not need to participate in every element of the conversation. If an important call comes in during a conference, I can put my line on hold and quickly answer the incoming call.”

Voice messaging was a critical need for CresaPartners, since brokers have limited time and are often working with several clients at once. The Cisco solution gives employees the flexibility to access voice messages using the phone and via their email inboxes, enabling them to use their time more efficiently.

“If a voicemail arrives while I am on the line, I can click on the WAV file (via email) and listen to my message without leaving the conference,” says Gage. “With the Cisco solution, I can stay productive while working on several tasks at once. Our business is like juggling oranges. You have to throw them all up in the air and touch every one, every so often, and not let any of them drop. Our Cisco solution helps us do that.”

Gage and his team have found that the Cisco SBCS delivers an ideal mix of features and affordability, for a rapid return on their investment.

“We expect the Cisco solution to pay off in spades,” says Gage. “If we can gain an hour a day that we can use to call customers, it’s a good investment.”

Solution

The CresaPartners solution is built around the Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business. This single-box solution combines voice, data, video, security, and more into an easy-to-manage solution that provides more than enough features and capacity for the firm.

“As we evaluated our budget for the new office, we chose to spend our money on solutions that would help our brokers be more productive,” says Gage. “The Cisco small business solution provided the best in class features that we needed, with plenty of room for growth.”

Designed specifically for the needs of small businesses, the Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series includes an automated attendant to handle incoming calls. Its sophisticated messaging gives brokers new ways to communicate and respond to customers fast.

"Since voice messages are also converted into emails, I can simply type out a short cover note and forward the actual message to a customer or client," says Gage. "I no longer have to take time to pick up the phone and call a client to update them. The efficiency in our communication improves every day."

To help its dynamic employees stay connected from home or on the road, CresaPartners uses Cisco Unified IP Communicator soft phones, which give mobile employees the same phone capabilities they enjoy in the office.

"We are absolutely a mobile workforce," says Gage. "Our brokers can securely access the network over a virtual private network [VPN] connection, and customers can reach us anywhere over our Cisco soft phones. I was working from home during a snowstorm last week, and my phone rang just as it would in the office. The client didn't notice any difference, and was impressed that we were still at work."

PRODUCT LIST

Smart Business Communications System

The Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series is also the foundation of the CresaPartners data network, providing rich networking features like wireless connectivity and security to help safeguard the company's business information.

"We have wireless access for all of our laptops in the office, and our firewall resides on the Cisco system as well," says Gage. "Anybody in the company can securely access our network, anywhere in the office."

Next Steps

With communications at its new Norwalk office running smoothly, CresaPartners has begun exploring how it can take full advantage of all the features that its Cisco solution offers.

"We expect our office to grow to 10 to 15 employees by the end of this year, and we anticipate that we will use virtually every feature available on the system, because it makes us more efficient," says Gage. "I'm actually using it as a recruiting tool. If we can make more calls during the day, we make more money. It's as simple as that. And if you can show a broker that they can do their job without fumbling around for a phone number, we think they will find it very attractive as well."

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smallbusiness> or contact your authorized Cisco partner.



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