

Global Benefits Provider Improves Employee Mobility and Productivity

Unum used the Cisco Unified Wireless Network Solution to streamline meetings, enhance training, and increase employee mobility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNUM

- Financial Services
- Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States
- 10,000 employees

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Improve ability of employees and vendors to connect to business applications during meetings
- Reduce costs and effort required to support employee training sessions
- Increase overall employee productivity and collaboration

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Deployed secure wireless network to extend network access to conference rooms and throughout the business campus

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Faster, easier connectivity during meetings
- Streamlined training session setup and support
- Increased employee collaboration and connectedness

Business Challenge

Unum, formerly UnumProvident, is a leading provider of employee benefits products and services, covering more than 25 million people in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Unum Group and its subsidiary companies encompass a global workforce of 10,000 employees and provided more than US\$6 billion in benefits in 2006.

With so many products and lines of business to support, vendor meetings and internal conferences are a large part of day-to-day business for Unum employees. In a perfect world, visiting vendors and employees would be able to prepare their materials a few minutes beforehand and start meetings on time, and employees would return to their regular duties on schedule. Unfortunately, reality rarely cooperated.

“Our conference rooms were not designed with network connectivity in mind, and we have had issues providing access,” says Dan Collyer, director, Unum IT Communications Services. “We had groups carrying low-cost hubs and switches into meeting rooms and dropping patch cords all over the room to accommodate their needs for network access.”

“We have a lot of meetings and vendor presentations, and it was very time consuming for our network staff to try to connect everyone,” says Jim Dotson, senior communications engineer, Unum IT Communications Services. “Often, meetings would be as much as 30 minutes late because people were scrambling to get everyone connected.”

In addition to providing network access for meetings, the company also wanted to find a better way to keep employees connected to their e-mail and essential business applications during training sessions. This need was particularly acute during new product rollouts, when employees might need to be away from their desks for many hours.

“When we have large quarterly meetings, managers really want employees to be there participating,” says Gemree Fe de Leon, communications analyst, Unum. “Employees needed to be able to multitask and monitor their jobs during the meetings, but it was very difficult to provide everyone with connectivity.”

Unum leaders also were looking for ways to help employees communicate and collaborate more efficiently.

“The Chattanooga campus is primarily spread out between two buildings,” says Dotson. “We have lots of people constantly moving from cube to cube, and they could really benefit from being able to take their laptops, share ideas, and engage in ad hoc collaboration sessions. We wanted to be able to provide that.”

“Overall, the solution has increased productivity due to the ease of access to information. That kind of productivity is helping us to pay for the investment”

—Dan Collyer, Director, Unum IT Communications Services

Network Solution

Unum's IT leadership recognized that a wireless network with guest access capabilities for vendors could address all of these issues. However, as a major financial services company, Unum needed to ensure that any wireless solution would be extremely secure. IT leaders also needed a solution that would be easy to deploy and operate, and would make the job of IT Communications Services staff less complicated, not more.

After reviewing several options, Unum chose the Cisco® Unified Wireless Network Solution to provide pervasive wireless connectivity across the company's headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Unum had long used a Cisco network and had previously deployed a Cisco IP voice solution at several of its campuses. Based on the success of these solutions and the company's strong relationship with Cisco, company leaders believed that Cisco was the best choice to provide the wireless network. The unique features and capabilities of the Cisco solution were also compelling.

“The centralized management capabilities of the Cisco Unified Wireless Network products really moved Cisco to the top of the pack for us,” says Collyer. “The architecture of the system is exactly what we were looking for because it provided a very secure and easy way to deploy our wireless infrastructure.”

“We do not have to worry about managing each individual wireless access point,” says Dotson. “We can manage and configure everything from a single, easy-to-navigate interface. When we need to add another access point, we just install it, and it comes online. It saves us a lot of time.”

The solution's robust security features also played a role in the decision and allowed the Unum IT Communications team to deploy the wireless infrastructure with confidence.

“Wireless had been a little taboo here previously,” says Dotson. “As a disability insurer, we have a lot of concerns about information privacy and complying with regulations like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. We had tried a limited wireless solution before, but it was too hard to control. This solution gives us a lot more flexibility and a lot more centralized control of security. It gives us a central point of management to deny access or even shut the entire system down if we suspect a security issue.”

Business Results

Today, hundreds of employees and vendors at Unum's Chattanooga headquarters use the wireless network every day, and the solution has improved the way meetings are conducted. Secure network access is now freely available to all vendors and employees who need it. Getting connected is fast and easy, and meetings are much more likely to begin and end on time.

"The solution has greatly reduced the time that it takes for guests and for Unum employees to get network access during meetings," says Dotson. "When our vendors come to visit, they have a job to do, and the last thing that they want to worry about are technical issues. Today, they can get online right away without worrying about all of the steps that they had to take before to get connected. They have definitely benefited, and they have told us that they appreciate it."

"Internal meetings, as well as vendor meetings, are much more productive when you are able to access data seamlessly," says Collyer. "Today, vendors and employees can simply enable the wireless cards on their laptops, and they are connected."

Supporting employee training sessions is a much smoother, easier process for the IT Communications Team than before. With the ability to connect hundreds of users from a single access point, trainings can also be much larger than in the past. The solution is especially beneficial to Unum employees themselves, who can now remain connected to e-mail and essential business applications during lengthy training sessions, improving their responsiveness and productivity.

PRODUCT LIST

Routing and Switching

- Cisco 2800 Series Integrated Services Router
- Cisco 3800 Series Integrated Services Router
- Cisco 7200 Series Router
- Cisco Catalyst® 3750 Series Switch
- Cisco Catalyst 4500 Series Switch
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switch

Security and VPN

- Cisco PIX® 525 Security Appliance
- Cisco ASA 5500 Series Adaptive Security Appliance
- Cisco VPN 3000 Series Concentrator

Voice and IP Communications

- Cisco Unified Communication Manager
- Cisco Unity

Wireless

- Cisco Wireless Control System
- Cisco 4400 Series Wireless LAN Controller
- Cisco Aironet® 1200 Series Access Points

"We recently held a major training for more than 80 employees for one of our Web-based enrollment tools," says Dotson. "That just would not have been possible before. We did not have the scalability to handle that many people at once without dedicating staff and setting up a whole new network to support the training. That represents a real cost savings for us, as well as a savings in time and technical resources. In my opinion, those savings alone make the solution worth while."

Employees are also benefiting from the mobility that the wireless solution provides in their day-to-day work. Employees can collaborate and share information whenever and wherever they need to, throughout the Chattanooga campus.

"I see people working in many of our common areas, and places such as the cafeteria are now used for ad hoc meetings," says Collyer. "Overall, the solution has increased productivity due to the ease of access to information. That productivity is helping us to pay for the investment."

Next Steps

In the coming months, Unum plans to expand the wireless solution to its other major campuses in the United States and even to remote field offices. The centralized management capabilities of the solution will allow the IT Communications team to completely control and secure those segments of the wireless network remotely. Unum is also piloting a wireless voice solution that would allow mobile employees to carry their internal extensions wherever they go on campus with handheld wireless IP phones. Ultimately, the wireless infrastructure provides a flexible network foundation

that allows Unum to consider virtually any mobile application that boosts employee productivity and efficiency.

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Unified Wireless Network Solution, visit:

www.cisco.com/go/unifiedwireless.

To find out more about Cisco Financial Services solutions, visit:

www.cisco.com/go/financialservices.



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