

Nonprofit Cuts IT Management Time by 90 Percent with IP Phones

Customer Case Study



Fellowship of Christian Athletes excites end users by deploying feature-rich Cisco collaboration technology.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer name: Fellowship of Christian Athletes
Industry: Nonprofit
Location: Kansas City, Missouri
Number of employees: 65 in the United States, 1300 internationally

Challenge

- Keep pace with latest technology within very limited budget
- Migrate from unreliable 20-year-old phone system
- Scale to accommodate changes in call volume

Solution

- Cisco Business Edition 6000 with integrated Cisco Unified Contact Center Express offers feature-rich communication services
- Cisco Unified IP Phones and the Cisco Jabber application enable FCA to scale as call volume increases
- Cisco Catalyst switches provide robust, reliable network backbone

Results

- Cut IT management time by 90 percent and reduced long-distance phone bills
- Managed call overflow during peak times to avoid busy signals and long hold times
- Excited users across the organization with ease of use and superior call quality

Challenge

Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) is one of the largest Christian sports organizations in the world. Founded in 1954, FCA focuses on serving local communities by equipping, empowering, and encouraging coaches and athletes to make a difference. The organization employs 65 people in the United States and is rapidly expanding its global footprint to include 1100 employees internationally.

Like many nonprofits, FCA must keep pace with technology trends with a very limited budget. "We had a phone system that was over 20 years old," says Steve Beckerle, intranet manager at FCA. "It was completely unreliable. At one point, the system was down for five days. That's a major problem for us because our phone lines are how we stay connected to many of the people we serve."

Due to the inflexibility and inefficiency of its legacy phone system, FCA was unable to accommodate annual spikes in phone usage. "Every summer, we organize sports and leadership camps for young people across the United States," says Beckerle. "As you might expect, we get a high volume of camp-related calls, so we rely on a team of interns to help us handle the increase in traffic. With our old system, we found it difficult to adapt to those temporary fluctuations in demand. Sometimes we were short on handsets, other times we didn't have enough bandwidth. There was simply no easy way to adjust at a moment's notice."

Despite those issues, FCA hesitated to replace its legacy solution. Users were comfortable with the phone system despite its drawbacks, and leadership was concerned that deploying a new solution might not be affordable. But eventually, the organization hit a roadblock that clearly pointed in a new direction. "We lost technical support for our old phone system," says Beckerle. "Replacement parts were only available on eBay. At that point, a new phone system was no longer a nice-to-have. It was a necessity."



“Compared with the time required to manage our old phone system, I estimate that I’m spending 90 percent less time managing Cisco technology.”

Steve Beckerle
Intranet Manager
Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Solution

After a thorough review of offerings from Cisco and another vendor, FCA chose Cisco® collaboration solutions for their simplicity, functionality, reliability, and ease of use for support staff and volunteers. The Cisco solution exceeded all communications requirements at the right price. “The other vendor tried to save us money by pushing us into a hybrid IP/digital phone solution,” says Beckerle. “But the functionality just wasn’t there. Cisco not only provided all the features we were looking for but also enabled us to upgrade our whole network using more robust, reliable hardware. Our previous switches were 10 years old, so the Cisco Catalyst® switches came as a real blessing.”

FCA relied on Alexander Open Systems (AOS), a Cisco partner, to help identify the right Cisco technologies, oversee the implementation, and train employees on how to use the new phone system. “AOS did a great job from beginning to end,” says Beckerle. “They listened to what we needed, and they made smart recommendations. I trust them, plain and simple. When they tell me that something is going to work, I know it’s going to work.”

Based on recommendations from AOS, FCA deployed Cisco Business Edition 6000, which provides call control, mobility, messaging, conferencing, instant messaging, and presence capabilities. The organization also implemented 65 Cisco Unified IP Phones and the Cisco Jabber® application, along with Cisco Unified Contact Center Express for comprehensive contact management, advanced call routing, and real-time reporting.

This innovative solution gives FCA an entirely new level of insight into network patterns and call volume. “With our new phone system, we can have real-time statistics on the number of inbound and outbound calls, along with how many calls are on hold,” says Beckerle. “We even know which users are available to speak to a caller. That helps us manage call traffic and analyze patterns so that we can make key staffing decisions and anticipate major changes in demand.”

Results

By deploying the Cisco collaboration solution, FCA achieved a significant reduction in operational expenses almost immediately. “Compared with the time required to manage our old phone system, I estimate that I’m spending 90 percent less time managing Cisco technology,” says Beckerle. “I add users when necessary, and that’s about it. On the old system, even a minor change like moving from one desk to another would take hours on the operational side. Now we can do the same task in a matter of minutes. We’ve even reduced our long-distance bills because we’re able to tie old analog lines into the new system.”

The Cisco solution gives FCA a level of flexibility and scalability that it simply did not have before. During camp season, for example, callers now enjoy shorter wait times because Beckerle and his team have more options for managing overflow. And with Cisco IP telephony on every desktop, Beckerle can expand his phone bank during the busiest times of the year. “In the old days, if our camp registrars were on another line, callers would get a busy signal and need to call back later,” he says. “Now the overflow goes to our support services group, so we’re able to engage with more people on the first call, not the second or third.”

Perhaps most importantly, end users at FCA are thrilled with their new phone system. “We’ve received an overwhelmingly positive response from our colleagues,” says Beckerle. “Everyone tells me that the call quality is so much better and that the phones are so much easier to use. With a typical implementation, you generally get at least a few users who push back, but that wasn’t the case here. I didn’t hear a single complaint. In fact, everybody went out of their way to tell me how pleased they were with our new system.”

Next Steps

As FCA continues to expand around the globe, Cisco technology is sure to keep pace. “We’re not going to outgrow this phone system,” says Beckerle. “That’s both comforting and exciting because the sky’s the limit here. For example, I see a lot of opportunities to add advanced functionality like video. The important thing is that wherever we need to go and whatever we need to do, our Cisco phone system is robust and powerful enough to be right there with us.”

More Information

To read more about Cisco collaboration solutions, go to www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.

Product List

- Cisco Business Edition 6000
- Cisco Jabber
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
- Cisco Unified IP Phones (models 7975G, 7911G, 7942G, and 7962G)
- Cisco Catalyst switches



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