Insurance Company Streamlines Asset Management

Insurance firm boosts IT agility and achieves contract renewal savings by partnering with LaSalle Solutions and Cisco.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer: U.S. insurance company

Number of Employees: 2000

Challenge:
- Simplify asset management and interactions with Cisco support
- Gain clear, accurate picture of all assets within network infrastructure
- Consolidate number of contracts to streamline renewals and procurement process

Solution:
- Cisco Services and LaSalle Solutions provide audit of storage and network infrastructure
- LaSalle's LAMP offers network visibility and asset reports from one convenient interface
- LaSalle and Cisco provide ongoing support for all asset management needs

Results:
- Reduced number of contracts by 33 percent, easing day-to-day asset management
- Achieved financial savings by switching from one-year to multi-year renewal contract
- Freed up IT resources to focus on more value-added tasks

Challenge

This Cisco customer offers auto, home, life, and business insurance protection to policyholders across the midwestern United States. Thanks to a long-standing partnership with independent agents and a commitment to providing a hassle-free experience for customers, the insurance company has grown into a US$1.3 billion company, earning an "A" rating by A.M. Best for its excellent credit standing.

Because the company relies on its partnership with independent agents to expand its business, the company's network, and its ability to host effective collaboration, plays a critical role in the success of the business. The company also has a presence in the online insurance space, further adding to the urgency of having a highly available and easily manageable network infrastructure.

With Cisco storage and networking products building the foundation for the insurance company's core business applications, high availability was never a problem. However, for one of the company's storage area network administrators, ease of management proved to be a challenge. "While we never had any issues with the hardware itself, it was when I was on a support call and needed a specific serial number for a product where I felt frustration," he says.

Over the years, the company's network has grown to include hundreds of products from various vendors. This growth results in an equally large number of contracts. "With all the different contracts and equipment we were trying to manage, tracking down a specific serial number was not easy," says the storage area network administrator. "Our Cisco account manager did everything she could to help, but we still had problems tracking our assets and finding what we were looking for. We needed to work together to find an answer."

CISCO

> "With the time we save by streamlining asset management, I can now put more effort into planning and enhancing the network for our end users. Ultimately, that translates into greater productivity and operational efficiency for our company."

Storage Area Network Administrator
U.S. Insurance Company

Solution

Realizing the challenge confronting the insurance company, the Cisco account manager introduced the company to LaSalle Solutions, a Cisco partner and value-added reseller that provides lifecycle management services for technology assets such as switches and routers. "When working with customers, we focus more on a holistic lifecycle approach as opposed to a single project at hand," says LaSalle Solutions Vice President and General Manager Steven Robb. "And that's where our LAMP tool comes in."

Designed to streamline and simplify the management of maintenance contracts, equipment leases, and disposal asset information, LaSalle's LAMP offering proved an ideal solution for the insurance company. LAMP works in conjunction with Cisco SMARTnet® Service, a 24-hour technical support service that provides flexible device-by-device coverage, to analyze essential asset and contract-related data.

"Even at first glance, we knew immediately that LAMP was something we wanted," says the company's storage area network administrator. "The tool makes it so easy to pull up assets by site, serial number, contract number, you name it. We can then run reports so that we can see what's located where, what's coming off support, and what trouble tickets are currently active. And it's all accessible through a clean, user-friendly interface." He also points to the convenience of having LAMP available on mobile devices, including the Apple iPhone and Google Android devices such as the Cisco Cius™.

However, LAMP alone is not what impressed the insurance company's storage area network administrator; it was LaSalle's overall engagement methodology that truly resonated with him. As part of LaSalle's lifecycle approach, the company worked with Cisco to provide an audit of the customer's storage and network infrastructure, pulling data collected by the Cisco® Installed Base Lifecycle Management (IBLM) program. Using a proven, three-phase process, Cisco IBLM helps customers proactively and continuously align business objectives with technology to achieve success, which indeed the insurance company felt it did. Cisco generated a contract summary report, an uncovered equipment report, as well as a summary shipping report, which LaSalle used to conduct a comprehensive network audit.

"After identifying anomalies and walking us through a variances report, the LaSalle and Cisco team helped us clean up the environment, which resulted in a significant consolidation of our SMARTnet contracts," says the storage area network administrator. "We were also able to standardize network configurations using the toolset in LAMP. Now we can plan network refreshes much easier moving forward."

Throughout the process, LaSalle was always available to the insurance company's team, a value-add that the storage area network administrator continues to appreciate today. "I guess you could say I'm somewhat spoiled in that no matter what I need, I can hand it over to LaSalle and get an answer back in 15 minutes," he says. "They really take care of everything, which makes my life so much easier."

Results

Today, the insurance company has a clear, accurate picture of all its network assets and contracts, both from Cisco and other vendors. As a result, the team has a better grasp on asset management, and is now able to respond not only to current needs, but future ones as well. "With end-of-life alerts and other forms of proactive information, we can focus on optimizing our environment versus putting out fires," says the storage area network administrator. "And the fact that all this data on both active and inactive equipment is available from a single one-stop shop online is absolutely priceless."

The insurance company's goal of contract consolidation was also achieved. "Thanks to LaSalle and Cisco Services, we were able to consolidate our contracts by end point, enabling us to scale down our contracts by roughly 33 percent," says the storage area network administrator. This reduction streamlines the renewal and procurement process, as well as interactions with Cisco support.

Pleased with the improvements that he saw, the storage area network administrator made the decision to switch over from a one-year to a three-year contract with LaSalle and Cisco. "We felt so comfortable working with the combined team, and we were so happy with where they'd taken us, that we extended to a multi-year contract," he says. "Not only do we get the discount and learning credits that come with the deal, we also have price protection for the next three years, which results in significant financial savings."

Like anyone working in IT, the insurance company's storage area network administrator strives to provide the most innovative, modern technology environment for his colleagues. Key to that is staying on top of the latest advanced solutions. "With the time we save by streamlining asset management, I can now put more effort into planning and enhancing the network for our end users," he says. "Ultimately, that translates into greater productivity and operational efficiency for our company."

Next Steps

The insurance company does not foresee any change in its relationship with LaSalle and Cisco moving forward. "This partnership has made my department more successful, so the only change I would see is that it would get stronger and stronger," says the storage area network administrator. "We've had a great run together so far, and I look forward to seeing that continue."

For More Information

- To learn more about LaSalle Solutions' LAMP tool, visit: http://www.elasalle.com/lamp.

- To learn more about Cisco Installed Base Lifecycle Management (IBLM), visit: www.cisco.com/go/tn.

- To learn more about Cisco SMARTnet Service, visit: cisco.com/go/smartnet.

Solution List

Data Center Solutions
- Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches

Services List

Cisco Services
- Cisco Installed Base Lifecycle Management (IBLM) Service

- Cisco SMARTnet Service