



Italian bank builds collaborative platform to improve organizational efficiency and business agility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Banca d'Alba

Industry: Financial Services

Location: Italy

Number of Employees: 479 in 68 branches

Challenge

- Increase efficiency and reduce travel across widely-dispersed organization
- Optimize mergers and acquisitions, and impressive IT support for end users

Solution

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager collaborative platform
- Cisco Jabber for unified workspace
- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center for web conferencing, training, and IT helpdesk support

Results

- Improved communications, information flow, and decision-making
- New companies, branches, and users integrated faster, and at less cost
- More effective, targeted training with no traveling time

Challenge

With rolling hills that reveal breathtaking scenery around every corner, northwest Italy has some of the most beautiful countryside in the world. But this idyllic setting is also one of the most daunting when it comes to running a business across multiple locations.

Banca d'Alba, the most popular cooperative bank in the region, well understands this challenge. Its 120,000 customers, of whom 42,500 are company shareholders (making Banca d'Alba the biggest by shareholder number among the Credito Cooperativo federation), are located in small towns and villages scattered across 250 municipalities. Created in 1998 from the consolidation of three local cooperative banks, Banca d'Alba has grown rapidly, underpinned by an unwavering focus on understanding the economic needs of its customers and its role in supporting the community.

With that growth came the challenge of maintaining consistent processes and nurturing a common culture. Other priorities for the bank included helping insure customers receive great service and have access to new and innovative products: from online banking to consumer credit solutions.

Since its creation, the bank has also used technology to streamline processes and support effective communications. In 2002, it became one of the first banks in the country to harness the benefits of IP telephony, using Cisco® Unified Communications Manager (UCM) as a scalable platform for growth and lower operational costs through easy-to-manage adds, moves, and changes.

Several years ago, Banca d'Alba also started to use video conferencing facilities to help insure better communications between executives. Video end points were provided at the bank's corporate headquarters and its operational center, 20 kilometres apart in the town of Alba, and at a couple of the larger branches even further away.



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Head of Information Services
Banca d'Alba

Solution

Most recently, the bank upgraded its Cisco UCM servers as part of a technology refresh, providing it with a single unified communications and call control platform for voice, video, mobility, and presence services.

“Upgrading our Cisco Unified Communications Manager platform was key to moving IT forward to the next level by creating a platform for collaboration,” says Michelino Bonino, head of information services at the bank. “It meant we could improve internal efficiencies, through more effective and timely communications, while also introducing video-based solutions that offer a real alternative to the need to travel for face-to-face meetings or to receive training.”

The bank's small IT department embraced this foundation and decided that the next step was to deploy Cisco Jabber™. Available for a wide range of end devices including Windows desktops and mobiles, the Jabber client unifies presence, instant messaging, video, voice, voice messaging, desktop sharing, and conferencing.

“The nature of day-to-day operations and our growth strategy make for a very dynamic environment,” says Bonino. “Cisco Jabber makes collaboration simple for users, which makes it easy for people to understand the benefits of using it. It creates a unified workspace that provides a range of easy-to-use and useful tools at users' fingertips. For example, presence lets you know when a colleague is available and makes contacting them as easy as click-to-IM-or-call.”

Phase one of the company's collaboration deployment involved installing Cisco Jabber on 80 desktops, including personnel working in the branches and on the IT helpdesk. The bank also introduced Cisco WebEx® Meeting Center to help enable desktop-based web conferencing.

But, such is the dynamic nature of the bank that while the IT team was dealing with the deployment, a new, more pressing need arose. The team's top priority switched to integrating a newly-acquired bank onto the Banca d'Alba corporate infrastructure. The new acquisition ran a mix of private branch exchange (PBX) telephony systems from various vendors in its branches. In the past, the Banca d'Alba team would have needed to purchase and install voice gateways for each branch and connect these gateways via leased lines to the network.

However, this time, a bit of lateral thinking and the versatility of Cisco Jabber allowed the team to devise another solution. Cisco Jabber was installed on the desktops of the new staff, effectively joining them to the corporate network. As a result, they were able to benefit from cheaper on-net calls, access to directory services and the presence status of colleagues, and collaboration features such as IM.

Next, using the Cisco Jabber Software Development Kit, the team designed a web application to further support the new bank. In less than two weeks, click-to-call and screen-pop capabilities were incorporated into a homegrown helpdesk web-based intranet portal. This Jabber integration looks up calling data from incoming calls and auto-populates fields in the web page, providing information at the fingertips of helpdesk staff, thereby improving service and resolution times. In the future, this functionality will be enabled in other modules of the intranet web portal, helping to improve productivity and service experience for all bank staff handling inbound calls from customers and business partners.

Another use case under development is to embed presence information, click-to-IM, click-to-call, click-to-video, and click-to-WebEx capabilities into the company's intranet. This development will allow company employees to search the directory (by name, location, and department), see presence status, and click to initiate real time communications.

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All three projects are being completed in-house with the tools, documentation, and code available at www.jabberdeveloper.com. The site is available to all Cisco customers and partners to access and embed Cisco UC capabilities into any web-based application.

Results

Even though the collaboration deployment is only at phase one, the bank is already seeing the advantages. For example, as early adopters, the bank’s IT team experienced first hand the benefits of the new environment. “Providing IT support to users over the telephone is never ideal, because very often they find it difficult to describe their issues, or what they are doing. And because so much of what people do relies on having access to the right systems and IT tools, any problem or downtime is very stressful for them” says Bonino. “The ability to quickly set up a shared Jabber session and view the desktop has been invaluable in helping us to more rapidly resolve issues and get people working again.”

Users have quickly learned to appreciate the new Cisco Jabber collaborative tools on their desktop, especially presence and IM, which have helped users avoid repeatedly missing calls from their colleagues. Increasingly, the convenience of IM chat is replacing a phone call. Streamlining communications has helped to improve information flow and enable faster and better informed decision-making. Overall productivity will receive a significant boost when the solution is deployed to all employees.

Phase two will see more people benefitting from webcams on their desktops. “Video is a major part of our IT strategy moving forward,” says Bonino. “Being able to see a person’s reaction while you are talking to them is often as important as hearing what they are saying, especially if you are discussing a difficult subject.”

Cisco Jabber will also boost communications between the branches and even reduce the need for senior managers to visit branches so often. In addition to Cisco Jabber-enabled video calls, the bank is planning to integrate the solution with existing room-based video conferencing facilities, and also to extend web conferencing via WebEx Meeting Center onto each desktop.

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The ability to quickly organize and deliver training was particularly valued when the bank made its latest acquisition. Cisco WebEx was used to brief and train new staff outside branch opening hours.

Although the impact of the solution on areas such as staff productivity and training had been expected, the flexibility of the collaboration tools has taken even the IT team by surprise. “The versatility of Cisco Jabber is amazing,” says Bonino. “Using it, we were able to snap in voice services to the new bank within days. Previously, it would have taken weeks to order temporary lines from the local service provider, and we would have had the extra expense of voice gateways. Being able to provide our new colleagues with interim voice and video services, virtually overnight, has really helped bring the two organizations closer, faster.”

Next Steps

Phase two of the collaboration deployment will see Cisco Jabber used throughout the bank. Further integration with Cisco WebEx and the company's existing video conferencing system will include the option to add the immersive video experience provided by Cisco TelePresence®. Video is also being considered as a means of making the expertise of remote specialists more readily available to customers and colleagues.

The use of Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing will enable the solution to be deployed at a pace that best suits the bank, and also allow it to explore new ways of developing its collaborative environment. One idea could be to install Cisco Jabber onto iPads, so that managers receive the same collaboration experience on the move as they have at their desktops.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures, solutions, and services featured within this case study, please go to:

www.cisco.com/go/collaboration

Product List

Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager 8.6

Collaboration Applications

- Cisco Jabber
- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center

Management

- Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing



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