

IT Services Provider Integrates Collaboration into Business Processes

EPL adopted Jabber, giving employees a unified interface for presence, instant messaging, voice, and customer-service webpages.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: EPL Inc.
Industry: Financial Services
Location: Birmingham, Alabama
Number of Employees: 100 Employees

CHALLENGE

- Provide outstanding customer service
- Help enable employees to collaborate from anywhere, including home offices
- Minimize IT costs and relocate data center without disruption

SOLUTION

- Unified all collaboration tools and customer-service webpages on one interface, Cisco Jabber
- Minimized data center space requirements by moving Cisco communications and collaboration applications to Cisco UCS C210 Rack-Mount Servers
- Replaced T1 lines with more cost-effective SIP trunks, using Cisco Unified Border Element (CUBE)

RESULTS

- Increased customer satisfaction by accelerating issue resolution
- Allowed teleworkers to collaborate as effectively as they would in the office
- Lowered data center costs by consolidating from nine to two servers

Challenge

Owned by several credit unions in the southeastern United States, EPL Inc. provides data processing for credit unions throughout the United States, as well as IT services that support lending, shared branching, collections, document imaging, and more. Credit unions that work with EPL receive turnkey services, including hardware, software, network connectivity, training, installation, and customer support. “We strive to provide outstanding customer service, which requires close teamwork,” says Doug Davidson, senior network engineer, EPL.

As part of its commitment to customer service, EPL continually improves the communications and collaboration capabilities available to its 100 employees, enabling them to “work your way.” For example, in 2004, EPL adopted Cisco® Unified Communications, unifying its previously separate voice and data networks. Several years later, the company added Cisco solutions for presence and instant messaging, helping enable employees to see if coworkers were online or on the phone, and then just click to send an instant message.

More recently, EPL saw an opportunity to integrate collaboration into business processes, such as resolving customers’ circuit and server issues. Previously, when customers reported an issue, EPL’s engineers had to use different interfaces to call coworkers, send

instant messages, open a shared file showing each customer’s equipment and circuits, and access a network-monitoring application.

“We wanted to integrate all of the tools we use in our business processes, including voice, presence, instant messaging, and data sources, on one interface,” Davidson says. “The goal was to improve the customer experience by accelerating issue resolution.” EPL also wanted to provide the same capabilities to employees who work from home offices.

Solution

EPL improved the customer experience and increased productivity by adopting Cisco Jabber™, which employees use on their Windows PCs and iPads to locate colleagues with specific expertise, see how they are available, and then click to send an instant message or call. Employees' status also indicates if they are in a meeting, because Jabber integrates with Microsoft Exchange. "We save time by not calling someone or walking to their office when they're not available," says Davidson.

In less than one hour, EPL customized the Cisco Jabber for Windows interface using the Extensible HTML Tabs feature. The interface now gives employees one-click access to webpages containing the information that employees typically need when interacting with customers. This information includes a list of servers and circuits assigned to each customer, as well as information from a third-party network-monitoring tool called Statseeker. "With a single interface, Cisco Jabber, we can access the people and information we need for customer service by initiating a call, sending an instant message to a coworker, or viewing current performance statistics on webpages," Davidson says.

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EPL also takes advantage of other Cisco solutions to lower IT costs. For example, all Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration applications are hosted on Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) C210 Rack-Mount Servers, reducing data center space, power, cooling, and management costs. And a Cisco Integrated Services Router (ISR) 3900 with Cisco Unified Border Element (CUBE) serves as a voice gateway to telecommunications services providers, helping enable EPL to gradually retire its T1 trunks in favor of more cost-effective Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) trunks.

Results

Improved Customer Satisfaction

By consolidating all tools used for customer service in one interface, Cisco Jabber supports EPL's commitment to providing an outstanding customer experience. Previously, if a customer called to report slow performance during a storm, for example, the EPL customer support engineer had to ask the customer to hold while the engineer called colleagues and checked a third-party application for issues with phone lines, power, or servers. "Now, we just click a tab in Cisco Jabber to view current performance statistics, and we can send an instant message to a colleague for a quick answer without having to put the customer on hold," says Davidson.

When many customers call at the same time, Cisco Jabber gives EPL's engineers another way to collaborate. An engineer might send an instant message to coworkers to find out if they are working on the same problem for other customers and then collaborate to restore service more quickly.

Freed Up 25 Hours Monthly for Support Specialists

Adding one-click access to webpages from Cisco Jabber also freed up 25 hours monthly for EPL's support specialists. Previously, this highly skilled team had to spend time helping customer support engineers navigate through the network-monitoring tool to locate the source of customer issues. Now the engineers no longer need assistance from specialists because they can simply click a tab on the Jabber interface to view the relevant information presented as a webpage.

Adding links on Jabber to view pertinent statistics from the network-monitoring application also eliminates the time and expense to train personnel to use the complex application for common tasks, and accelerates issue resolution in some cases. And publishing the records as a webpage and providing a link on Cisco Jabber enables multiple employees to view the same file at the same time.

Enabled Mobile Users to “Work Your Way”

Mobile employees have begun using Cisco Jabber on their iPads, allowing them to collaborate from anywhere. “Employees already bring iPads to meetings in place of notepads, and with Cisco Jabber for iPad, they can send and receive instant messages about urgent customer issues while they are in a meeting,” says Davidson.

Employees appreciate the flexibility of being able to work from anywhere without giving up the collaboration capabilities that they would have in the office. Davidson, for example, works from a home office two days a week using Cisco Jabber on a PC.

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Optimized IT

Hosting Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration applications on the Cisco UCS C210 Rack-Mount Server lowered IT costs “When we moved the Cisco applications to the Cisco Unified Computing System, we consolidated from nine to two servers, lowering space, power, cooling, and management costs,” says Davidson.

EPL further reduced costs and increased reliability by replacing public switched telephone network (PSTN) circuits with SIP trunks. Instead of buying new hardware for SIP trunking, the company simply upgraded the software on its existing Cisco ISR. EPL was able to transition gradually to SIP, because the Cisco ISR can simultaneously support CUBE (for session border control) and the Cisco TDM Gateway. The company began by moving its inbound toll-free calls to SIP trunks, later adding local and 1+ outbound dialing. Even after retiring the TDM circuits, EPL continued to take advantage of the TDM Gateway on the Cisco ISR to support interactive voice response (IVR), avoiding the costs of a separate gateway.

PRODUCT LIST

Unified Communications

- [Cisco Unified Communications Manager](#)
- [Cisco Unity® Connection](#)
- [Cisco Unified IP Phones 7900](#)
- [Cisco IP Communicator](#)
- [Cisco Unified Border Element](#) (CUBE) on Cisco Integrated Services Router (ISR)

Collaboration Applications

- [Cisco Unity Connection](#)
- [Cisco Jabber](#)

Data Center

- [Cisco Unified Computing System C210 Rack Server](#)

Next Steps

Now EPL plans to add one-click access to collaboration tools to salesforce.com, using the Cisco Jabber Software Development Kit (SDK). When tracking a customer case, EPL support teams will be able to call the customer with a single click, simplifying workflow.

In addition, continuing its tradition of continually improving collaboration and the customer experience, EPL is considering introducing Cisco WebEx® Social (formerly Cisco Quad™), an enterprise collaboration platform that combines the power of social networking, content creation, and real-time communications. The company is also evaluating Cisco WebEx Meetings, a web collaboration solution, for customer and internal training and support.

And to create a local presence in new markets without establishing physical offices, EPL plans to take advantage of SIP trunking to work with service providers that can provide local phone numbers.

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.



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