Cisco Collaboration Central to Ministry's Efficiency Drive

Social security department sees €15 million savings as Cisco Unified CM 9.0 with Jabber transforms ways of working

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Ministry of Solidarity, Employment, and Social Security

Industry: Public Sector

Location: Lisbon, Portugal

Number of Employees: 14,000

Challenge

· Cope with continuously rising customer demand while simultaneously achieving significant budget reductions

· Improve contact center flexibility and optimize agent resources through decentralization across multiple sites

Solution

· Integrated platform comprising Cisco Unified Communications Manager 9.0 with Cisco Jabber for Everyone, extending advanced unified communications facilities to the desk of every employee, while enabling all voice calls to be moved onto the ministry's Cisco WAN

Results

· Estimated four-year cost reduction of €7 million from carrying internal calls across WAN, with return on investment expected in first year

· Saving €2 million per annum, with commensurate customer service improvements, through virtualizing contact center across 30 regional sites

· Rapid adoption of collaborative tools with IM replacing emails and phone calls, and presence helping to quickly locate available people, for productivity and customer service benefits

Challenge

Southern European Union (EU) states have had a hard time lately: lack of economic growth, soaring unemployment, and rapidly deteriorating finances have taken a torrid toll, not least in the public sector. Consider the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security in Portugal. The ministry now provides welfare and benefit services to the country's 10 million citizens, and to a half million private companies, greatly increasing its workload. At the same time, it has come under relentless external pressure to slash budgets and improve efficiency.

The Instituto de Informática, a cross-government shard services unit, provides the ministry with IT services. "We also support many other major public sector organizations; they all share the same issue of trying to do more with less. There's no doubt technology can help," says Fernando Pereira, innovation and productivity manager at the Instituto de Informática.

In an urgent quest for greater efficiency, the first place to look was the ministry's legacy private automatic branch exchange (PABX) estate. Serving the needs of 14,000 users, this was based on proprietary standalone systems. The aggregate cost of cabling and rearranging phones and maintaining separate support contracts for individual buildings was bad enough. "Much worse," says Pereira, "was the fact that calls between branch offices and with headquarters were carried at huge expense over the public network."

With a wide area network based on Cisco technology and serving the ministry's 569 locations across Portugal, an IP-based solution was sought that would let the ministry save money by carrying internal calls over that infrastructure. Another pressing priority was collaborative working to boost productivity and improve customer service.

Furthermore, the ministry's contact center had some 300 agents working in a single location. Already dealing with more than two million calls a year, the economic situation and layers of new legislation were putting substantial pressures on demand. Agents were finding it hard to cope, and calls went unanswered; even so, many employees in branch offices could have helped had they been able to connect to the telephone system.

Solution

The Cisco® Unified Communications Manager (CM) 9.0 was chosen, following a pilot project with Cisco and its local partner, Convex. The industry-leading call control platform for enterprises with up to 80,000 users, Cisco Unified CM 9.0 offers state-of-the-art communications and collaboration by integrating all voice, data, and video traffic onto a single foundation for enterprise wide unified communications.

"In all tests the reliability of the Cisco solution was flawless," says Pereira. "We chose Cisco for performance and stability, the high quality and durability of its equipment, and the excellent partner network, which assured efficient installation and ongoing support."

The Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security has also introduced Cisco Jabber™. Available as client software for PCs, mobiles, smartphones, and tablets, Jabber transforms such devices with unified communications facilities. Presence, instant messaging (IM), desktop sharing, videoconferencing, and many other features are brought straight to screens and keypads. All ministry staff will be able to take advantage of Cisco Jabber for Everyone, which provides IM and presence facilities at zero cost for anyone with a Unified CM end-user licence.

At the ministry, Jabber not only interworks with Microsoft Office and Google Talk, but also allows users to control their Cisco IP Phones to initiate and manage calls from within the Jabber client. This level of desktop integration greatly eased ministry users' acceptance. "Our people had been using traditional PABX phones for about 13 years," says Pereira. "Jabber simplified operation of the new phones. It was a life saver because users adapted very quickly to the new environment."

Customers who are fully licensed for Cisco Collaboration can easily expand beyond Jabber for Everyone IM and Availability to leverage complete Jabber Unified Communications capabilities including visual voicemail, Cisco WebEx® Meetings, standards-based voice and HD video across desktop and mobile devices.

In fact, around 10 percent of ministry people will have full Jabber capabilities on their desktops including softphone and web and videoconferencing; and it's envisaged that mobile Jabber will be introduced during 2014 and beyond.

Arranged in a virtual environment, the ministry's Cisco Unified CM 9.0 software and the Cisco Jabber software run on twin UCS C210 M2 Series Blade Servers. For resilience, the ministry has two installations, one in the main data center in Lisbon and one in the disaster recovery data center, some 290 kilometers north of the capital.

The deployment will start with 600 employees at headquarters, 18 regional offices, and 30 regional virtual contact center locations. The aim is to have 13,000 Cisco Unified IP Phones (6921, 7942G, and 7965G Series) fully operational by the end of 2014. Managers working in the virtual contact center are equipped with the Cisco 7942G and 6921 Series, with the former providing access to at least two telephone lines, built-in headset connectivity, and a large pixel-based display.

"The simplicity and flexibility of the Cisco Unified CM platform enabled us to maintain high service levels throughout the contact center migration," says Pereira. "We had a pilot running in 15 days and in just two months the complete virtualized solution was working perfectly. Contact center customers simply did not notice the change, and we now have a seamless solution for all our callers."

Results

The solution is helping drive contact center virtualization: reducing central agent levels from 300 down to 150, and placing the point of service closer to the customer while optimizing agent utilization. Moreover, coping with workload peaks would simply require diverting staff from other duties in those remote sites.

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Fernando Pereira
Innovation and Productivity Manager
Instituto de Informática

In the virtual contact center environment, presence is helping improve response times and reduce unanswered calls. The ability to see who's available to help out and invite them to join a call using IM means agents can quickly collaborate to find the right solution for callers' issues. That capability radically improves the quality of service provided to the public.

The widespread introduction of IM and presence, with tight integration between Jabber and Microsoft Active Directory, also means people can participate in ministry innovation projects irrespective of location. For example, a contact center improvement project to bring more agents on board was completed in just two weeks with immediate positive citizen service effects.

Although quantifiable data is not yet available, the ministry is convinced that it is well on the way to achieving its business case ambitions. It estimates that the Cisco Unified CM 9.0 implementation will save some €7 million over four years by moving internal calls onto the WAN, while the virtualized contact center project will contribute another €2 million-worth of savings per annum.

The widespread adoption of unified communication by the ministry, thought unusual at this scale in public sector projects, will not only improve the financial return through increased productivity, but is also expected to encourage staff to introduce Jabber-based innovative ways of working. For example, people are starting to use IM in preference to phone calls or email, making the organization faster to respond and quick to solve customers' issues.

"We expect to see a full return on investment in just one year," concludes Pereira. "In addition, the stability of the Cisco solution and the strong partner support were crucial to the success of our contact center project."

For More Information

Learn more about Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study go to

www.cisco.com/go/collaboration

www.cisco.co./go/jabber

Product List

Collaboration
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager 9.0
- Cisco Unified IP Phones (6921, 7942G, and 7965G Series)
- Cisco Jabber and Cisco Jabber for Everyone

Data Center
- Cisco UCS C210 M2 Series Blade Servers