Property Firm Gains Competitive Edge by Outsourcing IT

CIT keeps Proserv Property Services' network reliable and its workers connected with Cisco products and services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Proserv Property Services
Industry: Property Maintenance
Location: Blackburn, Scotland
Number of Employees: 50

Challenge:
- Eliminate business-halting network downtime
- Leverage sophisticated IT network without dedicated IT staff
- Enhance business credibility with robust, reliable systems

Solution:
- Cisco OnPlus is used to manage network, and Cisco Small Business Support Service keeps it running smoothly
- Unified system and single point of management bring long-sought stability to Proserv network
- Reports, dashboards, web portal, and mobile access make it easy to view network performance

Results:
- Increased competitive advantage through sophisticated systems and quick customer response times
- Recouped cost of telephone system within four months by eliminating need for receptionist
- Improved employee productivity through faster problem resolution and more stable network

Challenge

Based in Blackburn, Scotland, Proserv Property Services has been providing property maintenance services to customers throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire since 2002. Today, the firm supplies everything from builders and roofers to joiners, electricians, landscapers, cleaners, plumbers, drainage engineers, tree surgeons, and more to commercial and residential projects large and small.

With a staff of 50 spread across its headquarters and in the field, as well as trained and approved subcontractors to further supplement its workforce, Proserv relies on its network to coordinate jobs and labor. In recent years, this reliance has meant using a job database system and arming its tradespeople with PDAs and smartphones so that Proserv can communicate with workers directly and meet clients' needs immediately, regardless of location.

This kind of responsiveness, however, requires a robust IT system and a dedicated full-time staff to manage it, and Proserv had neither of these. Due to its rapid growth, Proserv was dealing with an unsteady network that had been assembled piece by piece and rapidly expanded. Even worse, it was relying on just one part-time staffer to keep it all running. Says Proserv's Morgan Cooper, "When something malfunctioned and our part-time employee wasn't there to deal with the problem, our business came to a standstill. Obviously, this was unacceptable. This was a critical part of the business, yet we didn't want to devote any of our staff to the job. We needed someone to take it over for us."

Solution

Having suffered through both an outsourced IT arrangement and a telephone system that did not measure up, Proserv was looking for a systems integrator that could recommend a best course of action and provide the products to deliver it, as well as the knowledge to back up both. With that in mind, it turned to Clark Integrated Technologies (CIT), a Cisco Select Certified Partner, for help. Says Cooper, "I'm not an

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Morgan Cooper
Proserv Property Services

IT person, so I didn't go into CIT saying, 'I want this particular product.' They just set up the system at their own office using Cisco equipment, and then let us try it out. It worked beautifully. We were sold there and then, and we've never looked back."

That system included Cisco® Small Business 300 Series Managed Switches for superior network performance and reliability as well as a Cisco Unified Communications 540 phone system for an affordable unified communications appliance that could provide voice, data, voicemail, automated attendant, video, security, and wireless capabilities.

Perhaps just as important to Proserv as the components of its network and phone system, however, were the support and investment protection that the company could receive through Cisco Small Business Support Service (as delivered by CIT). Says Cooper, "With the next-business-day hardware replacement, Cisco Small Business Support Center access, and software updates provided as part of Cisco Small Business Support Service, we knew we would be able to focus on our business while CIT and Cisco worried about our network."

Another key selling point for the Cisco/CIT solution was Cisco OnPlus™, which allows CIT to provide cloud-based monitoring, management, and discovery of Proserv's network devices and IT services. Today, instead of a roomful of network equipment and a large IT staff, Proserv has one small (less than 6-inch-square) appliance that discovers network devices and collects data on them, and an outsourced IT provider (CIT) that uses the web-based OnPlus portal to remotely manage the network and everything connected to it.

The best part of Proserv's new IT infrastructure, says Cooper, "is that CIT and Cisco Small Business Support Service take care of it all." She goes on to say, "With the monthly management reports generated by CIT using their monitoring software and OnPlus, I can see performance over the network, but I don't need to resolve anything." What's more, thanks to OnPlus' integration with professional services automation (PSA) tools such as ConnectWise, tickets are automatically opened and CIT are notified whenever an event occurs on the network. As a result, issues are resolved before Proserv even becomes aware of them.

Results

Employees who were once uncomfortable with IT now find themselves boasting of Proserv's innovative use of technology, and customers seem to have taken notice. Says Cooper, "All of our clients now comment on the speed and sophistication of our service. And with network links to all of our company vehicles, we can look at our online tracking system and tell customers precisely how many minutes it will take for our plumber or electrician or window repairman to reach them. In a business that's 80 percent reactive, this affords a huge competitive advantage." What's more, it has allowed Proserv to demonstrate that it has robust and reliable systems. Says Cooper, "By investing in these stable systems, we inspire confidence in our customers and gain credibility as an organization."

Even more pleased than the customers are the employees who are now able to focus all of their time and effort on operational and strategic issues. "We're spending 100 percent more time thinking about the business and 100 percent less time resolving problems," says Cooper. "We've been able to move from a small business to a medium-size business thanks to Cisco products and services and the management CIT provides for them through Cisco OnPlus." Not surprisingly,

these same increases in productivity and workforce optimization have also led to cost reductions. For example, Proserv was able to recoup the cost of its Cisco phone system in just four months because the auto-attendant functions enabled the company to eliminate a receptionist position.

Next Steps

According to Cooper, Proserv's network is scalable to cover the company's anticipated growth over the next few years. But even though that means scaling up to handle as many as 32 on-site employees, Cooper is looking forward to the day that Proserv outgrows its current system. "After all", she says, "this is the kind of growth we were hoping for when we decided to outsource IT. Now thanks to CIT and Cisco Small Business Support Service, we're on pace to get to there even faster than planned. It will be a pleasure to turn to CIT and Cisco again to make sure that our IT infrastructure can support that growth."

For More Information

· To find out more about Cisco OnPlus Service, visit: www.cisco.com/go/onplus

· To find out more about Cisco Small Business Support Service, visit: http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/services/index.html

Product List

· Cisco Small Business Support Service

· Cisco OnPlus

· Cisco Small Business 300 Series Managed Switches

· Cisco Unified Communications 540 phone system

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