

Convention Center Solidifies Reputation as World-Class Venue

Customer Case Study



Qatar National Convention Centre optimizes communications for U.N. conference with help from Cisco Services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC)

Industry: Public sector

Location: Doha, Qatar

Number of Employees: 400

Challenge

- Help ensure anytime, anywhere communications for event attendees
- Safeguard network infrastructure from malicious attacks
- Find simple, automated way to manage install base and network contracts

Solution

- Cisco Services helps optimize network capacity and security for COP18/CMP8
- Cisco Smart Net Total Care enables network discovery and risk mitigation
- Cisco Focused Technical Support Services provide ongoing technical and operational support

Results

- Avoided network downtime and achieved 100 percent protection from malicious attacks
- Gained clarity on current and forecasted network costs, helping optimize planning and budgeting
- Reduced time to update inventory and improved accuracy of data by 80 percent

Challenge

A landmark project of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development, the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) is one of the most sophisticated convention and exhibition venues built to date, boasting an iconic design inspired by Qatar's symbolic Sidra tree.

In February 2012 and following the announcement in November 2011, the venue's outstanding profile led to it being chosen to host the 18th annual session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP18/CMP8. The Conference of Parties (COP) is the supreme body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), consisting of representatives from 194 countries meeting annually to actively address the problem of climate change. The COP is attended by dignitaries and heads of state and is often covered by media agencies worldwide.

Approximately 17,000 delegates and more than 800 media representatives attended COP18/CMP8, making it the largest and arguably the highest-profile event ever held in Qatar. QNCC was naturally eager to help ensure the best possible experience for the attendees and presenters of this globally significant conference. "An event of this size and complexity required a lot more equipment, bandwidth, and specialized staff than we had at the time," says John Burke, director of IT at QNCC. "So as soon as the conference was confirmed to be held at QNCC, we started planning for additional resources to make it happen."

As part of this planning, QNCC performed a thorough review of its infrastructure to optimize the network. However, Burke and his team encountered a challenge. "At the time, we were operating the network based on building design documents," says Burke. "This was not always reliable because final construction changes were



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Qatar National Convention Centre

not updated into the original design documents. We knew we had to carry out a network discovery exercise to find out the exact specifications installed in the venue. Then once we had an accurate inventory, we could manage our install base and network contracts more efficiently.”

Solution

With a significant pedigree in delivering support for similar conferences, Cisco® Services was more than eager to help. Cisco pulled together a small team of technical experts that could be relied on to work however long it took to resolve problems at COP18/CMP8 and deliver satisfactory support.

Facilitating a Successful COP18/CMP8

Cisco Services initiated the project by holding multiple meetings with QNCC and its hosting services provider Meeza, a Qatar Foundation joint venture and Cisco Managed Services Master Certified Partner, which provided additional technical resources for the team, along with data center hosting services. These meetings identified the need for a series of wireless audits and technology assessments, followed by remediation and event support for COP18/CMP8.

QNCC was able to expand its core team of 12 personnel to 183 technicians and engineers, with Cisco forming a part of this support team. Burke says, “We deployed more than 1000 laptops, expanded our IPTV systems to include 725 screens, implemented custom wireless solutions to support the influx of mobile device use, added two additional data centers, and changed our whole perimeter security to connect with the U.N.’s private network. It was a challenge to say the least, but it was well worth the effort.”

Once it came time for the two-week-long conference, Cisco Focused Technical Support Services, which includes Cisco High-Touch Engineering Services, was onsite with the QNCC team to help ensure any network downtime was kept to a minimum. The Cisco Services team also provided onsite wired and wireless technology and network security support for up to 14 hours a day. “Working with Cisco Services was one of the critical success factors that enabled QNCC to deliver world-class IT services at COP18/CMP8,” says Burke, acknowledging the support and enthusiasm provided by Cisco. “The event was a huge success, with both positive internal and external feedback.”

Easing Network Management and Problem Resolution

After COP18/CMP8 ended, the QNCC team focused on improving the way that it managed its Cisco install base. For that, Cisco Smart Net Total Care proved to be the answer. “With Cisco Smart Net Total Care, we no longer have to manually go around the building and climb up ladders to look up each physical serial number,” says Vivek Prabhakara, network manager at QNCC. “The service automatically discovers new devices we add to the network and provides us functionalities we didn’t have before, such as regular backups and missing device or bug reports, which are very helpful.”

The specific solution of discovering network devices in conjunction with Smart Net Total Care is Cisco Virtual Collector, a software-based network discovery tool that ties into QNCC’s existing VMware environment. “Rather than spend the additional time and money it would take to bring in a physical hardware-based collector, we decided to go with Cisco Virtual Collector because it was much easier to set up and use in our virtualized VMware environment,” says Burke.

QNCC uses Cisco Focused Technical Support Services to help resolve the more complicated issues that may occur on a large network.

Results

COP18/CMP8 was the largest and logistically most complex event that QNCC has hosted to date. It was a major achievement for the venue's IT team to support the event with uninterrupted network services, and Cisco Services was there through each step of the way. Says Burke, "With Cisco on our side, we were able to create a positive experience for all 17,000 COP18/CMP8 attendees, with zero network downtime and 100 percent protection from malicious attacks."

With the accurate inventory reporting and management provided by Cisco Smart Net Total Care, QNCC also sees significant cost savings. Says Burke, "Using Smart Net Total Care extensively on install base management will help us achieve savings on current and planned CapEx [capital expenditures] for 2014 onward. But more importantly, it will give us an accurate inventory of our network infrastructure, which we didn't have before. And because it's a Cisco-recognized discovery, there are no disagreements; we know what's being reported is what our Cisco contracts will be based on."

Cisco Smart Net Total Care is especially beneficial for Prabhakara and his team, who are tasked with day-to-day management and monitoring. "Cisco Smart Net Total Care gives us a more efficient way to manage our inventory of equipment," he says. "As soon as we plug in a new device, it is automatically displayed in our reporting, giving us end-of-life and end-of-support data." As a result, QNCC has been able to improve the accuracy of its end-of-life and end-of-support information by approximately 80 percent, while greatly reducing the time it takes to update its network inventory.

Whether it is providing QNCC with access to industry-leading engineers or helping the IT team manage its Cisco install base more efficiently, Cisco Services will be a key partner for QNCC as it continues to host some of the most preeminent events in the world.

Next Steps

Now that the QNCC team has a firm grasp of everything that is going on in its network, Burke and Prabhakara plan to focus on how best to optimize the network. "At this point, we realize it's time to step back and really take a look at how we can improve the customer experience and make the most out of the investment that the Qatar Foundation has put into the building," says Burke.

As well as continuing with Cisco Smart Net Total Care and additional Cisco support services, the team is reviewing whether to implement the Cisco Network Optimization Service.

More Information

- To learn more about Cisco Services, go to www.cisco.com/go/services.
- To learn more about the Cisco technologies QNCC is using, go to www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/vpndevc/ps6032/ps6094/ps6120/qatar_convention_center.pdf.

Services

- Cisco Smart Net Total Care
- Cisco Focused Technical Support Services (including Cisco High-Touch Engineering Services)
- Cisco Network Optimization Service



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