Customer Case Study

City Government Improves Caller Service and Cultivates Economic Vitality

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CITY OF SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

- 445,000 residents
- 97 square miles

INDUSTRY

- Local Government

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Improve customer service.
- Protect public safety.
- Strengthen economic viability.

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Replace Centrex service with Cisco IP Communications.
- Deploy scalable Cisco IP Contact Center (IPCC) solutions.
- Provide wireless connectivity in new city hall administration building.

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Increased ease of reaching the correct department.
- Saved $10 per phone per month, or $300,000 per year.
- Future efforts to reduce nonemergency calls to 9-1-1, improving public safety (anticipated).

The City of Sacramento, California improved service in its contact centers by replacing key systems and Centrex service with a Cisco® IP Communications solution.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

For the City of Sacramento, the top priority is customer service, which city executives define as connecting citizens to the department that can satisfy their needs—as quickly as possible. Other important priorities for California's state capital are public safety and economic viability.

To improve citizen service, Sacramento city officials wanted to make it easier for citizens and businesses to reach the department that could provide the needed service or information—a daunting challenge for a government with two and a half pages of listings in the local phone book. Callers often resort to calling 9-1-1 for nonemergency calls because they know that they can at least talk to a human. "Our 9-1-1 center is inundated with about 300,000 nonemergency calls per year," says Steve Ferguson, CIO for the City of Sacramento. Therefore, increasing the ease of reaching nonemergency departments has the potential to improve safety, as well, by freeing up 9-1-1 dispatchers to focus on true emergencies.

The city's previous phone system was also difficult to maintain, increasing costs and labor requirements. The IT division supported seven different key systems as well as the IP network, and needed several support vendors because no one vendor had the competency to maintain every system. "To provide more effective service to our internal customers, we wanted a single network that would support both data as well as voice, and that we could support with in-house expertise," says Karl Rosander, IT division manager for the City of Sacramento.

NETWORK SOLUTION

The City of Sacramento met its goals by replacing its disparate key systems and Centrex service with a Cisco IP Communications solution serving all government offices. Now voice calls and fax traffic travel over the same Cisco foundation infrastructure that the city built years ago for its data traffic. To date, 2500 employees use Cisco IP phones.

The Sacramento IT division uses Cisco IP Contact Center (IPCC) for multiple departmental contact centers. It helps improve service with automatic call distribution features, including conditional routing, call-in-queue and expected-wait-time messages, enterprise data displays, real-time data, and historical reporting. A 3-1-1 contact center for nonemergency calls, currently under development, will also rely on Cisco IPCC.

The City of Sacramento takes advantage of its Cisco foundation infrastructure for wireless connectivity in the new city hall administration building, which opened in 2005. Now senior executives from other locations, who typically spend time at city hall each week, can use their laptops to check e-mail or use applications in conference rooms or temporary "office hotels." "Access to the network helps city executives be more responsive to their constituents when they are away from their offices," says Ferguson.

Public safety agencies are using Cisco IP Communications, as well. For example, three fire stations in the City of Sacramento Fire Department have adopted Cisco IP telephony, using Cisco IP phones to make and receive calls and check voicemail as well as to send verbal or text pages to the built-in speakers and displays on Cisco IP phones. An administrator might send a text message reminding firefighters to submit their time cards, for example, or that a meeting is scheduled to begin. "The first fire stations to begin using Cisco IP Communications were reassured that Cisco IP phones require no additional training for firefighters, sustaining productivity," says Ferguson.

For the Sacramento Police Department, the City of Sacramento IT division has integrated Cisco Unity Voicemail with a previously separate voicemail system that the court liaison uses to inform officers, by badge number, that they are expected at a court appointment. The function is vitally important because if an officer fails to appear, the judge generally dismisses the case, depriving the city of revenue and potentially compromising public safety. Now officers can listen to court reminders through Cisco Unity Voicemail, avoiding the need to check two systems and increasing the likelihood that they will appear in court as scheduled.

BUSINESS RESULTS

The City of Sacramento's Cisco solutions are helping it meet goals for citizen service and economic vitality.

The flexibility of Cisco IPCC enables the City of Sacramento to sustain customer service levels during unexpected surges in call volume. In 2005, for example, one of the city call centers experienced a spike in call volume related to a change in the utility bill format. Callers had to remain on hold for long periods until an agent became available, causing other callers to this contact center, as well as other city contact centers, to receive busy signals. "After a few attempts to reach a city office result in busy signals, some callers contact the mayor or city council's office to report that the city government is unresponsive," says Ferguson. "Cisco IPCC enables us to scale to handle increased call volumes almost instantly, helping us meet citizen expectations for service."

At around 3:00 p.m. on the first day with higher call volume, IT decided to increase the number of ports for the city's contact centers from 55 to 80. "The very next morning, we had the call center capacity to avoid busy signals," says Rosander. "In a traditional telephony environment, provisioning more lines might have taken days, or even weeks. With the Cisco IPCC solution, we made the change in less than 24 hours."

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The City of Sacramento achieved return on investment (ROI) from Cisco IP Communications through a combination of reduced voice support costs, user self-service for moves, adds, and changes, and the ability to recover all equipment costs from city departments. The IT division bills departments for each phone, factoring in the purchase and maintenance costs for Cisco IP phones, Cisco CallManager servers, and Cisco foundation infrastructure, as well as lifecycle replacement costs. By contrast, when the city was using a Centrex service, it had to find its own funding when new physical phones or key systems were needed. "Controlling all physical components of the solution enables us to completely recover our costs," says Rosander. "And even with the lifecycle recovery costs built into our billing, departments save approximately $10 per phone per month." The savings are available for departments to invest in improving service effectiveness.

Another factor in ROI is eliminating the costs of moves, adds, and changes to telephone extensions. The value of this advantage was underscored in the summer of 2005, when 700 employees moved to Sacramento's new administration building. "In the past, we would have had to pay a service provider $75 for each move and wait three days for the change to take effect," says Rosander. "This time, employees simply disconnected their Cisco IP phones from the old office and connected them in the new. We saved $5100 for those employees alone, and avoided the productivity loss and citizen inconvenience of three days without phone service." To ensure that the employee's new location appears if the phone is used to dial 9-1-1, IT requires users to notify IT when they move their extensions.

Consolidating to a single phone system has reduced support requirements, enabling the City of Sacramento IT department to respond to issues more quickly. What's more, IT no longer needs multiple vendors for phone-system support and, in fact, can support the IP telephony system with in-house resources. "We can now troubleshoot and resolve phone issues in-house, because our engineers already have expertise with Cisco equipment," says Rosander.

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NEXT STEPS

The City of Sacramento's IT division is currently developing a 3-1-1 contact center for nonemergency calls, based on Cisco IPCC. Citizens and businesses will be able to dial 3-1-1 to reach a knowledgeable agent who can transfer the call to the correct department. The IT division is integrating Cisco IPCC with the city's customer relationship management (CRM) software so that even before agents answer a call, their screens will show the caller's address and call history. "Integrating Cisco IPCC with the CRM software will enable us to provide personalized customer service," says Ferguson. "If a resident calls for any reason, the agent can also inquire if previous issues have been resolved."

The city anticipates that the 3-1-1 contact center will also reduce the volume of nonemergency calls to 9-1-1, enabling the Public Safety Answering Point to focus on public safety. If a 9-1-1 dispatcher does receive a nonemergency call, currently about 50% percent of total call volume, he or she will be able to transfer the call by pressing a single button on the Cisco IP phone rather than spending time explaining to callers that they must hang up and redial another number. The ability to answer a 9-1-1 call seconds earlier can be crucial to emergency outcomes.

By improving customer service in multiple ways, the Cisco IP Communications solution is helping to increase the City of Sacramento's economic viability. "If we are recognized as a city with great customer service and ability to get the job done, be it issuing a building permit or picking up recyclables, economic viability improves," says Ferguson. "The best contribution that the IT division can make to the city economy is to support our customer service initiative, and Cisco IP Communications immediately began providing measurable benefits."

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This customer story is based on information provided by the City of Sacramento, California and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

Corporate Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 526-4100

European Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: 31 0 20 357 1000
Fax: 31 0 20 357 1100

Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-7660
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
168 Robinson Road
#28-01 Capital Tower
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

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