GreenPages™
Technology Solutions
Consulting. Engineering. Integration.

Unified Access to Systems, Voicemail, and Email; Built-in Redundancy; Collaborative Video Capabilities

"The software is capable of doing video conferencing so when we're ready, we can just upgrade certain pieces of our equipment to take advantage of it. This new system has set us up for the future."

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Challenge

↗ No unified way of communicating between technology and training centers and large field staff

↗ Variety of communication devices, no standards

↗ Outdated voice and data networks at all locations, no modern features

↗ Legacy equipment prohibited future growth

Technology

↗ Cisco Unified Communications Manager–Business Edition

↗ Cisco Unity Connection Software

↗ Cisco IP Phones

↗ Cisco Routers and Switches

Results

↗ Conference call functionality

↗ Voice to email

↗ "Find me" & "Follow me"

↗ Video conferencing capabilities

↗ Faster network

↗ System scalability for future growth

↗ Positive effect on morale

Easter Seals Massachusetts

Easter Seals Massachusetts runs an extensive set of programs for people of all ages, with many kinds of disabilities. The group helps the disabled with "assistive technology" to increase independence. Easter Seals is also involved in rehabilitation and therapy, job training, and a summer camp for disabled children. Programs are offered at more than 100 locations in Massachusetts.

Customer Challenge

With three main technology and training centers in Worcester, Boston, and New Bedford, Easter Seals Massachusetts has approximately 135 employees, most of whom are field staff. This places some unusual demands on the organization's phone system. "We never see them in the technology and training centers," explained Adam Shuster, Vice President of Finance and Administration. "We work with a lot of younger people, and they're used to communicating in many different ways. They all have cell phones and Blackberries, so we needed a convenient, reliable way of staying in touch."

Because Easter Seals' system was old and unreliable, they wanted to upgrade the voice and data networks at all locations and take advantage of some modern technology features, particularly voice to e-mail. The organization was concerned that, as their existing equipment became more obsolete, it would become harder to assure continuity. They wanted to be prepared for the future.

Technology Solution

GreenPages recommended an updated phone system using equipment and software from Cisco. The system is supervised by Cisco Unified Communications Manager–Business Edition (UCM-BE). Voicemail functions are handled by Cisco Unity Connection software. Communications with the New Bedford technology and training center are handled using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) integrated with the Communication Manager. All of the laptop computers in the centers are connected to the network through the phones.

The routers chosen for both Worcester and Boston are designed to provide "survivable" service. "We were looking for redundancy and were concerned about how long it would take to recover from a problem," Shuster said. "Now, if service goes out in Worcester, the calls are automatically sent to Boston. If Boston goes out, the calls go to Worcester."

All of the phones, switches, and software are compatible because all are supplied by Cisco. "There are some advantages to using open-source switches, but mixing and matching switches made by different manufacturers could cause compatibility issues, and we didn't want that."

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GreenPages installed the system using a phased approach. The pilot phase involved testing and configuration on a small scale—just a half-dozen phones. Once GreenPages used these to work out any bugs, the complete system was rolled out. Shuster said he was very pleased with GreenPages' performance during the project. "They were very professional. They planned things out, then worked to the plan."

As a Premier Certified Cisco Partner, GreenPages offered Easter Seals some special advantages during the installation process. "We ran into a situation where we needed some equipment, and it was backordered," Shuster explained. "Somehow, GreenPages worked some magic and got what we needed—they got us to the head of the line."

Successful Result

"Everyone has a definite sense that we have upgraded," he said. "Now it's easy to set up internal conference calls. We can include any number of people in these calls, including people outside of the organization.

Shuster says that one of the more frequently used features is "voice to e-mail" which allows an incoming caller to enter an e-mail address and record an audio message. The message then appears in the recipient's incoming e-mail. When the recipient clicks on the email, he or she can listen to the audio clip.

The system can do "Find me" and "Follow me" and can be set up so an incoming call rings at one office phone, a second office phone, and a cell phone—all at the same time. Someone can answer the call at any of these phones, and if they want to go to one of the other phones they don't have to transfer the call.

"The internal network is also running much faster," Shuster said. "I'd say that this has had a positive effect on morale. It's given the employees a sense that we made this investment for their benefit."

Future Goals

"The system has a huge list of features, and we're certainly not using all of them—yet," Shuster noted. "For example, the software is capable of doing video conferencing so when we're ready, we can just upgrade certain pieces of our equipment to take advantage of it. This new system has set us up for the future."