

Manufacturer Moves Ideas Instead of People

Biesse America uses unified communications to reduce travel, get answers faster, and gain a competitive advantage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>BIESSE AMERICA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing • Charlotte, North Carolina • 165 employees
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify communications among employees in three countries • Reduce voice and travel costs • Improve customer service
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced multiple phone systems with a centralized Cisco Unified Communications system • Gave employees tools to reach each other more easily • Used Cisco® WebEx® to troubleshoot and repair customers' systems
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified conferencing and collaboration • Saved US\$5000 daily by reducing repair visits to customer sites • Shortened time for customers to get answers

Challenge

Biesse America, a subsidiary of Italian manufacturer, Biesse Group, distributes advanced machinery used for woodworking, stone working, and glass working. Between 2006 and 2007, Biesse America grew from 75 to 165 employees, working in six offices in the United States and Canada. With more employees in more locations, the company needed a more cost-effective communications system that would help employees and customers reach the right person, the first time.

Previously, each location had its own private branch exchange (PBX) system. This arrangement resulted in high long-distance and international phone bills and made it complicated to set up conference calls. "In a global economy, a person's location should not matter," says Federico Broccoli, President and CEO, Biesse America. "When I'm in Charlotte, North Carolina, I need to be able to establish a conference call with a salesperson in Vancouver and someone

from our home office in Italy in less than a minute. We don't have time to think about where a person is."

Biesse America also wanted to answer customers' questions more quickly. "In today's business environment, to say, 'I'll get back you tomorrow' is to lose a customer," says Broccoli. "And if a technician at a customer site needs to wait on hold for 20 minutes to get an answer about a repair, the customer is not happy because his business is stopped until the machinery is repaired. Customers want answers now."

After evaluating five vendors, Biesse America found its solution in Cisco® Unified Communications. "We were already using WebEx, and we liked the simplicity of using one vendor for all of our communications needs," says Charlie Schulz, IT Manager. For help with designing and installing the solution, the company worked with SDI Networks, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner with specializations in unified communications, wireless, and security. "Biesse America already had a general idea that unified communications would help employees become more efficient and provide an excellent customer experience," says Trevor Kruger, regional account manager for SDI Networks. "We brought them to our offices to see demos of what they could accomplish with capabilities such as presence, mobility, contact center, and unified messaging."

Solution

SDI Networks installed the Cisco Unified Communications applications in the company's Charlotte, North Carolina headquarters. All other locations receive communications services over the network. Employees in branch offices can use all of the same features as employees at headquarters.

"SDI Networks did a tremendous job with planning, installation, and training," says Schulz. "They installed the system over the weekend, and everyone was able to use it first thing Monday morning."

The Cisco Unified Communications solution is more reliable than the old PBX systems and takes less time to manage, according to Stephen Goodman, Network Administrator. "We like being able to make minor changes ourselves, such as changing a person's directory entry, rather than waiting a week or more for a service provider," he says. The IT staff saves more time because they just change or add features once, on the centralized system, instead of in every office. "Cisco exceeded our expectations because we did not realize it would be so easy to administer and expand the system," says Schulz. "This was a pleasant surprise."

"In the new economy, waste is unacceptable. We regard Cisco Unified Communications as a strategic tool for becoming more efficient without increasing staff."

—Federico Broccoli , President and CEO, Biesse America

Results

Faster Call Resolution

When customers call for support, they want quick answers because when their machinery is down, their business is down. "We use Cisco Unified Contact Center Express to get customers to the right person, the first time, without transferring," says Schulz. SDI Networks set up the system to route calls based on the caller's language (English or French) and the kind of machinery they have. The agent can be in any office or even work from home using a Cisco Unified IP Phone. If customers need to call back later, they can easily reach the same technician by entering the session ID they were assigned during the first call. Later in 2008, Biesse plans to integrate the solution with its customer database so that agents will receive a screen pop showing the customer's equipment and the nature of the trouble ticket.

Fewer Customer Repair Visits

In the past, if support engineers could not solve machinery problems over the phone, a technician had to travel to the customer's site and often could not get there until the next day. Now support engineers use Cisco WebEx[®] Support Center to see and take control of the customer's PC screen used to operate the equipment. "Of every 10 customer calls that used to require a trip from a technician, we now resolve eight using Cisco WebEx," says Schulz. Customers are happy because they can often get back to work a full day earlier. And Biesse America saves money on travel. "Saving just two trips a month would pay for the Cisco WebEx service, and we're saving five to eight trips a day, for [US]\$5000 daily savings in air travel alone," Schulz says. And customers like the Cisco WebEx approach because they can get back to work hours or even a full day sooner. "Cisco WebEx is definitely a competitive advantage," Schulz says.

Full Communications Capabilities for Mobile Employees

When technicians do visit a customer site, they can now get answers about repair issues more quickly. Rather than dialing the main support number and waiting on hold, they can view a company directory and employees' presence information right on their mobile phone. One click connects them, even if the available expert is in Italy. "Cisco mobility solutions give our mobile employees the same communications capabilities on their mobile phones that they have in the office, including using our dedicated line to make overseas phone calls," says Schulz. "Traveling no longer means settling for reduced communications capabilities."

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—Charlie Schulz , IT Manager , Biesse America

Mobile employees are also easier to reach because they can just go to a webpage to indicate which phone numbers they want to ring when someone dials their office phone number. Schulz, for example, has specified that after his desk phone rings twice with no answer, his cell phone rings. And employees who receive voicemail messages when they are away from their desks are notified immediately, either with an e-mail to their mobile phone or a call from the voicemail system. "The result is that a customer who is trying to reach you while you're on a business trip doesn't have to wait several days for an answer," says Goodman.

Simplified Collaboration

All 50 support and administrative employees use Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, a desktop application that integrates multiple communications applications and services, instant messaging, presence, voice message access, click to call, video, conferencing, user directory, and call history. "Before I call someone, I always check their presence information to see if they're available, on the phone, or away," says Schulz. "If they are on the phone, I either send an instant message or call another expert who is available." Broccoli uses Cisco Unified Personal Communicator to spontaneously set up conference calls. "I just check employees' presence information on my screen, click to call, and escalate to a conference," he says. "This has made my life easier."

Less Travel by Managers

By conducting meetings with Cisco WebEx Meeting Center, Biesse America managers are making fewer trips to the company's other locations in North America and Italy, which is reducing costs, saving time, and reducing carbon emissions. "To conduct business the old way, by traveling to meet face to face, is no longer financially viable," says Broccoli. "With Cisco WebEx, we are moving ideas instead of people."

Next Steps

Now that the Cisco Unified Communications system is in place, Biesse America plans to add new capabilities. One idea is using Cisco WebEx System Management to provide a remote backup service for customers' machinery data. The same solution will enable the company to perform software upgrades over the network instead of sending a technician to the customer's location.

Cisco Unified Communications will also be the foundation of Biesse America's new, state-of-the-art media room, where the company plans to showcase its newest products. Customers will have the

option to either travel to the room in person or see demonstrations virtually, using WebEx. The company will also use the media room to provide training to partners and suppliers.

Soon, contact center agents will be able to escalate a voice call to a Cisco WebEx collaboration session by simply pressing a button on their Cisco Unified IP Phone. "I personally am constantly discovering new capabilities from unified communications," says Broccoli. "In the new economy, waste is unacceptable. We regard Cisco Unified Communications as a strategic tool for becoming more efficient without increasing staff."

PRODUCT LIST

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst 3560 and 2811 Switches
- Cisco 871 Integrated Services Router for home-based technicians

Voice and Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7961 and 7941
- Cisco Unified Personal Communicator
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
- Cisco Unified Presence Server
- Cisco Unity Connection
- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center and Cisco WebEx Support Center

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/uc>.



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