

Cisco Partner **AMS.NET** Helps County Department Unify 100+ Sites with Cisco IP Communications



The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE), in San Jose, California, provides support services to the county's 32 school districts, which educate more than a quarter million students each year. The Office of Education helps school districts achieve greater efficiency and cost savings by offering support and centralizing certain functions, such as administration, human resources, business, and technical support services.

When the 10-year-old private branch exchange (PBX) phone system at the main office was having problems, Phil Benfield, senior network engineer for SCCOE, reviewed the organization's overall network and telephone systems. A number of aging phone systems were also located in other buildings, such as the 33 sites for the county's HeadStart Program, 92 special education sites, the 13 alternative school sites, and a handful of sites for other programs.

"Communicating among all these different programs and offices was a challenge, and rather than unifying us, the aging and dissimilar phone systems created even more distance," says Benfield. "Our challenge was to find a communications solution that would provide a dial plan and consistent features to 1000 users at 100 different sites."

Vendors for several manufacturers—including Siemens, Avaya, 3Com, and Cisco Systems—responded to the Office of Education's request for proposal. A Cisco engineer supported its responding partners, reviewing the specs and helping design a response. Benfield says Cisco vendors and partners submitted a lower bid overall, because a Cisco solution could leverage existing routers and infrastructure.

"We did not have a clear preference for Cisco, but with the advantages of leveraging our existing hardware, a Cisco solution would clearly work best for us and ultimately save money," he says. Benfield and his team chose Cisco Silver Certified Partner AMS.NET, which holds Cisco specializations in routing and switching, VPN security, wireless LAN, and IP communications.

AT A GLANCE

Partner

AMS.NET is an IP Convergence Specialist providing infrastructure and communication technology solutions to businesses, educators and government entities throughout the West Coast.

Business Challenge

Establish a communications solution that provides a dial plan and consistent features to 1000 users at 100 different sites, including some sites with only a few users.

Network Solution

Cisco CallManager, Cisco 2821 Series Integrated Service Router, analog gateway, and remote site routers; and four-digit dialing among the county's district buildings.

PARTNER SUCCESS STORY

AMS.NET

"AMS.NET added flexibility and provided a well-written professional services section in its response," says Benfield. "We met with the top four responses, and AMS had the best solutions for meeting our budget. They found creative ways to save money."

With the Cisco and AMS-designed IP communications solution, SCCOE's existing data network infrastructure could be leveraged to its 100 sites, and consistent telephony features and a unified dial plan would be provided without having to implement either a stand-alone PBX or a PBX shelf at each remote site.

"Some of the sites have only a few users, but Phil wanted to provide them with the same communication and features as at the main site," says Thomas Vasconi, senior account manager for AMS.NET. "The centralized model that Cisco offers is ideal for their existing network, and is unique in its ability to scale."

The solution proposed by AMS.NET included Cisco CallManager, a Cisco 2821 Series Integrated Service Router, analog gateway, and remote site routers. It provides four-digit dialing among the county's district buildings, creating much-needed unification among all the programs and sites supported by SCCOE.

The first phase of deployment included installation of Cisco CallManager to support 614 users throughout the main administration building, and 5 remote sites designated for Phase 1. For the first phase, AMS designed the dial and route plan for the SCCOE-wide system; the company then deployed 60 IP phones throughout the remote sites, and 554 IP phones in the main administration building.

With the dial and routing plan designed and established by AMS in Phase 1, the Office of Education IT personnel can then scale to support Phase 2.

"The SCCOE team worked closely with us during Phase 1 deployment, and now can handle the next installation phase," says Vasconi. "This was critical to meeting the budget challenge." AMS carefully planned critical first-phase deployment, versus what could be postponed to the second phase and handled mostly by SCCOE. An AMS-directed "train the trainer" program enabled the Office of Education IT staff to handle training, saving additional funds.

The SCCOE plans to have 40 percent of its remote sites up on the Cisco IP Communications solution by June 2006, and the remaining sites deployed by the end of 2007.

According to Benfield, the first phase of deployment is already reaping benefits. Employee moves, adds, and changes are handled quickly without a separate service contract. Departments are communicating and coordinating more efficiently thanks to the unification allowed by easy four-digit dialing. And Benfield plans to tell the school districts about the advantages of IP phones.

"One of our roles is to educate school districts about technology that can help them," he says. "We'll show the network managers how their school district can take advantage of this technology. With an IP telephony system, schools can get rid of old bell, surveillance, and attendance systems and run everything on the IP network."

AMS.NET has seen how the cost savings and business benefits delivered by IP communications has caused a big shift to the technology in both the public and education sectors.

"There are barely enough hours in the day to respond to the interest in IP," says Vasconi. "The savings realized managing a single environment is very attractive. With the third-party applications and systems becoming available, we can further leverage the IP investment. It is really bringing together IT and facilities functions."



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