

Lighting Design Firm Supports Collaboration, Responsiveness

Illumination Arts uses Cisco Smart Business Communications System to improve creativity and teamwork.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ILLUMINATION ARTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry: Architectural Lighting Design• Location: Bloomfield, NJ• Number of Employees: 6 employees
CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve phone messaging and conferencing capabilities• Incorporate scalability to support growing business
RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced collaboration and teamwork• Improved responsiveness to clients and business partners
SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smart Business Communications System to bring together voice and data networking, with support for mobility, voice conferences, and flexible messaging

Challenge

Illumination Arts is an award-winning designer of innovative lighting solutions for all types of corporate, government, and institutional projects. Founded in 2004 by Faith Baum and Ken Douglas, the firm has designed more than 60 projects, including signature bridges and other transportation projects, schools, commercial office buildings, synagogues, museum exhibits, and hotels.

A philosophy of teamwork and collaboration is the hallmark of the firm's practice. Illumination Arts works with architects, bridge engineers, landscape architects, developers, interior designers, and other professionals to develop projects. Reliable, responsive phone communication is critical to bringing together this vibrant mix of creative voices.

"Our business is very relationship-oriented, so we must keep track of thousands of individual contacts," says Faith Baum, principal at Illumination Arts. "An effective telecommunications solution can be a huge advantage to us by enabling us to work with customers and clients more effectively."

As Illumination Arts became more successful, the firm found that its basic office phone system could no longer scale to support its growing staff. "We are a small company, and we were using a basic off-the-shelf office phone system," says Ken Douglas, principal at Illumination Arts. "Unfortunately, it could only support five phones, and we couldn't grow beyond that number."

Call-handling and message features were limited as well, making it difficult for the firm to respond quickly to clients and associates. "Our old phone system made it very cumbersome to call in and check voicemail when we were outside the office," says Baum. "Unless someone called us directly on our cell phone, we might not receive a message until we got back to the office."

To continue to grow successfully, Illumination Arts needed a communications solution that could evolve and change to meet new business needs. The solution would have to support a collaborative environment, provide rich messaging and call features, yet be reliable and trouble-free.

“The Cisco solution certainly does help with collaboration. The sophistication of the solution makes it possible for us to work together with the other people in our office in a way that we couldn’t before. It frees us to move around the office and quickly reach the people we need to, whether we are on a one-on-one call or talking with a client on a speakerphone at someone’s desk.”

– Faith Baum, Principal, Illumination Arts

Results

To provide a flexible, dependable phone solution for its office, Illumination Arts deployed the Cisco® Smart Business Communications System. Designed specifically for the unique requirements of small companies, the Cisco Smart Business Communications System includes feature-rich desktop and wireless IP phones that are helping employees collaborate and respond to customers more effectively.

“The Cisco solution gives all of our employees access to a speakerphone, built right into the handset on their desk,” says Baum. “We also have two wireless IP phones that make it easy for us to roam around the office while we are having a conversation. If we are on the phone with a client and need to check on a project with an employee, it’s so much easier to simply stop by the employee’s desk while we are on the phone. There’s no need to interrupt the conversation by putting the caller on hold.”

Baum says the Cisco solution provides a powerful mix of mobility and flexibility that enable the firm’s employees to interact and make decisions more quickly and naturally than they could in the past.

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The Cisco Smart Business Communications System is also helping employees stay connected to clients and business partners when they are working from home or on the road.

“Faith and I are out of the office a lot, and we really need to stay accessible,” says Douglas. “If we receive a voicemail in the office, our Cisco solution automatically emails the message to our cell phones, and we can listen to the WAV [Waveform audio] file right away.”

Instead of dialing in to a clumsy voicemail retrieval system, employees have messages delivered to them in seconds, wherever they are. The result is a more agile, customer-focused business. “The Cisco solution helps us improve our responsiveness, because we don’t have to deal with finding the time to call in and check messages in the office,” says Baum. “The solution just sends us the messages automatically, so we always know when one is waiting for us, and we can stay in touch with clients on the go.”

Solution

The Illumination Arts network solution is based on the Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business, which brings together all of Illumination Arts' communications on a single easy-to-use platform. Part of the Cisco Smart Business Communications System, the all-in-one solution securely integrates data and voice communications.

"We got the phone system two months ago," says Baum. "It has certainly made things easier, and we are communicating with each other in ways that we couldn't before. We are just beginning to explore what else we can do with the phones."

Each employee uses a Cisco Unified IP Phones 7900 Series desktop handset, with built-in directory screens, speakerphones, and rich call-handling features such as call forwarding and transfer. Cisco 7921G Unified IP Phones provide wireless phone connectivity, while the Cisco Unified IP Conference Station 7936 offers state-of-the-art speakerphone conferencing.

Robust messaging features make it easy for employees to forward voicemails, either as phone messages or as email attachments.

"If I receive a message that a colleague needs to hear, I can just forward it to them directly as an attachment," says Douglas. "We were very excited about this function."

The firm also depends on Cisco SMARTnet[®] Service to keep its solution running at its best, every day of the year. This award-winning technical support service offers direct, anytime access to Cisco engineers, as well as a wide range of online technical information, software updates, and more.

Because it is designed to adapt to business changes, the Cisco Smart Business Communications System can easily support dozens of phone extensions, giving Illumination Arts plenty of room for growth in the future as the business thrives.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smallbusiness> or contact your authorized Cisco salesperson.



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