

Financial Firm Makes Wise Money Move with New Phone System

Summit Financial Management saves money and adds professional features with unified communications.

Executive Summary

Summit Financial Management

- Financial management and advice
- Shelton, CT
- Number of employees: 4

Business Challenge

- Reduce expenses while receiving more services
- Make it easier for clients to reach staff
- Identify company using caller ID

Business Results

- Saved US\$500 a month in telecom expenses
- Increased client access to staff
- Improved professional image with caller ID

Network Solution

- Cisco Smart Business Communications System

Business Challenge

Summit Financial Management was leasing phone services from the firm's building landlord. Although this solution initially worked for Summit, the company eventually decided that it wanted more control over its voice services so it could design a system that met its specific requirements.

One concern was reducing expenses. Using the system from the company's property management company did not allow Summit to select its own carrier or the specific services for which it was charged. Summit wanted to reduce its expenses and only pay for the services that met its business need, some of which were not available through the packaged solution.

One feature that Summit felt was important was caller ID, so the company's customers could identify that it was Summit Financial calling. The old solution displayed the name of the property management company on outgoing calls, often confusing Summit's customers. Lisa LeVasseur, branch marketing associate says, "It may not seem like a big deal to some people. But we wanted to brand our company."

Summit Financial Management works closely with individual clients to meet all of their financial requirements. With the current market realities, being instantly accessible to clients is critical to the firm's ability to operate, even when staff members are not in the office. Using the old system, Summit experienced outages that made it impossible for the company to serve clients in the way that it wanted.

The old system also lacked individual voicemail boxes, which slowed down communication. Clients need a private and efficient way to leave messages for their consultants; without individual voicemail boxes, that simply was not possible.

Business Results

Summit Financial decided to implement a Cisco® Unified Communications solution that would integrate voice and data communications and meet the company's business requirements.

The new Cisco voice and data network has provided a wealth of benefits to Summit Financial. Increased reliability makes it easier for clients to reach the firm. Now, each employee has his or her own voicemail box, which makes it possible for clients to

leave private and detailed messages. Presence capabilities let anybody in the office see who is on the phone, and whether they can transfer a call or should send it to voicemail. Now, clients do not have to wait on hold to find out if their consultant is available; they are instantly transferred to the right place.

The new network has even improved productivity. Before staff members were not able to put calls on hold or transfer them. So they were getting up from their desks to announce calls. Now they can answer or transfer calls from any phone in the office.

“We immediately noticed a cost savings with the new Cisco phone system.”

—Lisa LeVasseur,
Branch Marketing Associate,
Summit Financial Management

LeVasseur says that the new system makes the firm’s client service faster, more efficient, and more professional. It also makes staff members easier to reach. “We use the call-forwarding feature a lot. It’s a small office, and there are times when no one is in. With the new Cisco system, we transfer calls to a cell phone or home phone.” With a secure connection to the data network, staff members can also access client information remotely, so they can answer questions no matter where they are working. When staff members are away from the office they can also use Cisco IP Communicator, from anywhere in the world. This application enables their laptops to function as their IP phones and with access to all the upgraded features.

LeVasseur says, “The caller ID is huge for us. Being able to pick up a call you know is for you saves time. Outgoing is just as important. Clients wouldn’t pick up the phone before. For them to see that it’s us calling is important.”

But, more than saving time, the Cisco solution is saving Summit Financial approximately US\$500 a month.

The Summit Financial staff likes the new Cisco IP phones better, too. “The staff CPA can pick up calls as needed,” says LeVasseur. The firm has experienced no situations with lost phone service since installing the new Cisco system.

Network Solution

When Summit Financial realized that it needed a new solution, the firm turned to Ash Creek Enterprises, a Cisco Select Certified Partner. “We had worked with Ash Creek Enterprises before, and they suggested we could integrate our data network with a new phone system that would give us more control of costs and service, and give us more services,” says LeVasseur. “They also knew we could save money.”

Summit Financial is now able to choose among different call providers to save money. The firm is now buying its own solution instead of renting one. And its new system gives the firm greater functionality with voicemail, multiple line appearances, and presence. Summit is also saving about US\$500 a month with the new Cisco system.

Ash Creek Enterprises installed a Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series system, a component of the Smart Business Communications System, which integrates the voice and data network in a single box. Importantly to Summit Financial, the features provided include caller ID, voicemail, music on hold, and an automated attendant. It also allows wireless connectivity, and provides network security with a built-in Cisco firewall, computer network switching and routing, and a built-in VPN that provides Summit Financial with highly secure remote access to the network by employees who use the Cisco IP Communicator application when working remotely.

Mark Calzone, vice president and chief operating officer of Ash Creek, says the system will save Summit Financial “thousands of dollars on its telecom expenses. It also enjoys better call handling and much more advanced features. Plus the firm is now paying less money each month for six phone lines, saving money on both local and long-distance service.”

Summit Financial also took advantage of financing through Cisco Capital® to purchase its new system. The firm was able to take advantage of a 36-month, zero percent leasing option, with a US\$1 buyout option so the system belongs to Summit at the end of the lease. This helps the firm manage its cash flow and continue to reinvest in the business.

Next Steps

Summit Financial uses an Act database for its client files, and plans to integrate that with the phone system to enable click to dial screen pops on the PC which will provide essential customer information. LeVasseur says the company also plans to add more mobility features in the future.

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco solutions for small business, go to www.cisco.com/smallbusiness.

To see the latest offerings from Cisco Capital, visit www.cisco.com/go/ciscocapital.

Product List

- Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business, which includes:
 - Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express
 - Cisco Unity® Express
 - Integrated LAN switching capability
 - Integrated wireless LAN access point
 - Secure Cisco IOS Firewall
 - Encryption and Virtual Private Network (VPN) capability
 - Cisco Configuration Assistant
- Cisco Unified IP Phones Models 7970G, 7960G, and 524G
- Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7921G
- Cisco IP Communicator



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