

Nonprofit Maximizes Outreach with Updated Phone System

Customer Case Study



Prostate Cancer Canada uses Cisco collaboration solutions to fuel fund-raising, expand reach, and better serve the community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer name: Prostate Cancer Canada

Industry: Health nonprofit

Location: Toronto

Number of employees: 35; more than 1000 volunteers

Challenge

- Replace aging phone system to better support donors, staff, and prostate cancer community
- Enable small staff to have big impact through improved collaboration and reach
- Provide communications infrastructure that can scale to support expansion

Solution

- Cisco Unified IP Phones and data system ease communication pains, eliminate downtime
- Cisco Jabber facilitates easy, instantaneous collaboration between employees at separate offices
- Cisco Business Edition 6000 paves way for major fund-raising initiative

Results

- Fielded more than 2000 calls in 30-day period to raise \$170,000 in first-ever raffle
- Improved donor experience by using voice queuing to provide service in language of caller's choice
- Extended reach without expanding workforce through improved communication and collaboration

Challenge

From its headquarters in Toronto and a satellite office in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Prostate Cancer Canada employs a small staff to carry out a big mission: raising funds to support prostate cancer research and assist those affected by the disease. This mission is made even more challenging given that Prostate Cancer Canada is the sole national organization in Canada dedicated exclusively to these tasks. The nonprofit serves a population of more than 35 million with a staff of just 35, so it is constantly looking for ways to maximize its impact. With 85 percent of the organization's revenue going directly to its mission, Prostate Cancer Canada is clearly succeeding.

In recent years, however, one of Prostate Cancer Canada's most important tools—its phone system—had begun to hinder the organization's communication efforts. "Our old Nortel phone system was at the end of its life," says Luke Michalik, manager of IT for Prostate Cancer Canada. "We were losing so many lines that we had to reboot the system every other day, a task that involved significant overhead." Worse still, this meant that donors weren't always getting through and that patients weren't necessarily connecting with the services they needed on their first attempt.

Prostate Cancer Canada also needed to make it easy for its staff to communicate, not just with a prostate cancer community spread throughout the country but also with coworkers in the organization's two offices and a chief executive who often works remotely. With an eye toward future geographical expansion and a keen understanding of its current needs, the nonprofit began looking for a new phone system.



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Luke Michalik
Information Technology Manager
Prostate Cancer Canada

Solution

To aid it in this search, Prostate Cancer Canada enlisted long-time telecom partner and provider Telus Corporation, which quickly identified Cisco® Business Edition 6000 as the right solution. The Cisco solution offers the reliability that Prostate Cancer Canada sought and the scalability that it requires to accommodate widely varying call volumes and a fluctuating number of volunteers. It also could link the nonprofit's two offices and provide onsite and remote users with a range of collaboration capabilities.

Once Prostate Cancer Canada settled on Business Edition 6000, the Telus-assisted deployment couldn't have gone more smoothly. Says Michalik, “Not long ago, we might have had just 4 out of 12 incoming lines working at any given moment. Now, with Cisco Business Edition 6000, we have 24 lines, and they're all working all the time. Our phone system is no longer an obstacle to our mission but rather a tool that we can use to extend it.”

Unlike Prostate Cancer Canada's old Nortel phone system, Business Edition 6000 provides a full-blown collaboration solution with capabilities that extend far beyond just call handing. The ability to work remotely, for example, has been invaluable for Michalik. “As the lone IT person, I have to remain constantly connected,” he says. “That's become a lot easier since I've been able to use the soft phone functionality of Cisco Jabber in the Business Edition 6000. Now, I can just take my laptop home and make my calls and track the system from there.”

Michalik even uses Cisco Jabber® to check his phone messages. This is because, unlike traditional voice systems that play audio voice messages sequentially, Jabber provides a visual display that allows him to see instantly who's called and when. That makes message navigation much easier.

Prostate Cancer Canada staff members were also quick to pick up on the instant messaging and videoconferencing capabilities afforded by Cisco Jabber. Now, employees use Jabber to arrange informal meetings and conversations on the devices of their choosing with geographically dispersed colleagues. Best of all, thanks to the presence feature in the Business Edition 6000 platform, and its tight integration with the active phone directory, repeatedly missing calls is now a thing of the past. Everyone can see at a glance who is available.

Results

Prostate Cancer Canada wasted no time putting its new phone system to the test, launching the organization's biggest fund-raiser to date, just months after deploying the Business Edition 6000 solution. With a 540-horsepower Chevy Camaro ZL1 as the prize, the nonprofit saw its call volume spike to more than 2000 calls in a one-month period during its first-ever raffle.

“We raised approximately \$170,000 in that raffle,” says Michalik, “a feat we could not have achieved with our old phone system. It simply would not have been able to handle the call volume associated with the event.” As it was, Michalik was able to use call queues and hunt groups to build a mini call center just for the raffle. And because he was able to see the load and how well the phone system was accommodating it, he was able to make changes as needed to scale the system up or down accordingly.

Prostate Cancer Canada has also been able to improve the day-to-day experience of the donors, patients, and researchers who reach out to the organization. By taking advantage of the native call-queuing application within Business Edition 6000, Prostate Cancer Canada can now route calls from French speakers to bilingual staff members. Easing communication for both Prostate Cancer Canada staff and the community they serve, Business Edition 6000 allows the nonprofit to achieve that most elusive of goals: extending its reach without expanding its workforce by making its employees more productive and its resources more readily available.

Not to be forgotten in this mix are the volunteers who contribute a significant amount of time and creativity to the organization's endeavors. Says Michalik, "With the makeup of our volunteer workforce constantly changing and the ways in which they serve continuing to evolve, we need to be ready to accommodate people when and how they want to connect with us. Business Edition 6000 allows us to do so by integrating seamlessly with network log-ins, Outlook Express, Active Directory, and more."

Case in point: When Prostate Cancer Canada's Halifax office recently ran out of phones for its interns, Michalik simply sent the office some USB headsets and set up the interns on soft phones. This kind of agility will become increasingly important as the organization taps into new trends such as micro-volunteering—in which people use the Internet to match their skills to nonprofits' needs to carry out discrete tasks.

Next Steps

As Michalik readily admits, Prostate Cancer Canada has just scratched the surface of the functionality available through Business Edition 6000. "Because we're small, we're learning as we go," he says. "However, we're looking forward to discovering new ways of using the system and are secure in the knowledge that we have a voice and collaboration platform that will be able to support Prostate Cancer Canada's plans for growth long into the future."

More Information

To find out more about Cisco midsize collaboration solutions, visit www.cisco.com/go/midmarket.

Product List

- Cisco Business Edition 6000
- Cisco Jabber
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 9971, 7962, 7942, 7937, 7915, and 6911



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