

# WEMA Bank PLC Steps Ahead on its Unified Communications Journey

## industry:

Financial Services

## country:

Nigeria

## business challenge:

Costly and unreliable voice communications between bank branches due to low-bandwidth availability

## solution provided:

Deploy advanced unified communications technology to unify employee presence, instant messaging, voice, desktop sharing and video conferencing in a single solution

## services:

Planning, deployment and integration services for Microsoft® Lync Server 2010 and Microsoft® Office Live Meeting

## results:

- Reduced telephony and travel costs, with the potential to further reduce maintenance costs for phone systems at local branches
- Improved communication amongst employees located at different branch offices

## Client Overview

WEMA Bank PLC is a universal banking institution incorporated in 1945 as a Private Limited Liability Company under the name of Agbonmagbe Bank Limited and commenced banking operations in Nigeria in the same year. The bank later became a Public Limited Company in April 1987 and was listed on the Nigeria Stock Exchange in January 1990. On 5 February, 2001, WEMA Bank PLC was granted a universal banking license by the Central Bank of Nigeria, thus allowing it to provide the Nigerian public with various financial and business advisory services. The bank has an asset base of N165 billion.

## Business Challenge

The bank's bouquet of business services includes commercial and consumer banking, institutional banking, corporate finance, retail banking and trade finance operations. The bank's clientele includes government parastatals, small and medium scale enterprises, middle tier companies and financial institutions across various sectors of the Nigerian economy – telecommunications, manufacturing, agriculture, food and beverage, oil and gas, construction and a cross section of the Nigerian public. With branches scattered all over the country, the Bank's 2,000 employees comprise professional and contract personnel.

To help its employees communicate across its branches, WEMA Bank PLC had deployed Microsoft® Exchange Server 2007 e-mail messaging and collaboration software and Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 R2 for its instant messaging and presence capabilities. Although the bank was satisfied with both of these solutions,

it still faced challenges with voice communications between the bank branches. At its headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria, it relied on a traditional private branch exchange (PBX) system for employees to place calls, but at branches in other countries, employees had to rely on their own separate telephony systems. These were expensive and sometimes required an operator to connect calls between networks. Employees at some branches also had problems communicating with other locations due to low-bandwidth networking connections only being available.

When Microsoft® Lync Server 2010 was released, WEMA Bank PLC was impressed with the instant messaging capabilities it offered. The bank wanted to further enhance the solution by providing additional capabilities, such as voice over IP (VoIP), web conferencing, and unified messaging. It should be noted that OCS R2 can also provide VOIP solution but Microsoft Lync server 2010 comes includes new features that make it more manageable, extensible, easier to deploy and reduces costs.

## Solution Provided

WEMA Bank PLC considered a unified communications solution from Microsoft to provide more instant, comprehensive communications for its employees because it had already deployed Microsoft solutions, such as Exchange Server, Office Communications Server R2, Active Directory, and Microsoft Office 2003. It believed that a Microsoft solution was the answer because it could more easily integrate the solution into its current network. In addition, the solution was

ultimately more cost-effective than any other as it did not require additional hardware and licensing.

To extend VoIP and conferencing capabilities, the bank upgraded to Lync Server 2010. For that deployment, WEMA Bank PLC enlisted the help of Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Dimension Data. Dimension Data used a gateway to integrate with the bank's PBX system at its headquarters in Lagos. This enabled direct inward dialling throughout the organisation from a central location and integrated with the bank call managing application, Asterisk. Asterisk, an open source communications server powers IP PBX systems, VoIP gateways, conference servers and more through a centrally managed voice call manager. This diverse voice environment was integrated and made possible using AudioCodes™ Mediant 1000 Media Gateway. AudioCodes provides smooth migration from disparate telephony and IT environments to the world of unified communications. AudioCodes™ Media Gateway connects the existing legacy telephony PBX with Microsoft unified communications servers. The bank was able to offer voice capabilities through Lync Server 2010 to 250 employees who make use of softphones with headsets. This was later extended to 2,000 users.

To enable web conferencing, WEMA Bank PLC deployed Microsoft® Office Live Meeting. Bank employees use web conferencing to conduct internal training and hold team meetings. They are also using desktop sharing in Lync to collaborate and share information during these meetings.

### Value Derived

By upgrading to a fully integrated Lync Server 2010, WEMA Bank PLC has been able to reduce telephony and travel costs, with the potential to further reduce maintenance costs for phone systems at local branches. It has also improved communication for its employees by providing conferencing and desktop sharing capabilities even to branches with lower-bandwidth connections.

Research shows that over 60% of business voice communications are internal. WEMA Bank PLC leverages its existing network infrastructure to facilitate the new, robust and scalable unified communication solution, using the voice and instant messaging capabilities in Lync Server 2010. WEMA Bank PLC employees use their computers to communicate with colleagues over the Internet, meaning that the bank saves money on phone charges for calls between branches previously provided by private and public voice and data network carriers. The bank also saves money with reduction on premium phone extensions deployed in internal networks and branches. Other cost reduction benefits include a reduction in travel expenses, as the bank uses web conferencing and desktop sharing to hold training sessions for employees at branch locations.