

Belkin



Belkin Cuts Call Centre Costs, Streamlines Management with Help from Dimension Data

Belkin has worked with Dimension Data on an IP telephony project that has improved customer service and support.

Industry

Technology

Country

Australia

Challenge

Replace an unreliable telephony platform with a new system that could be easily customised and meet the needs of the growing business.

Solution

A more cost-effective and reliable IP telephony system based on Cisco Unified Communications Platform.

Results

- Reduced call costs across the company's customer service and support centre
- Provided flexibility to allocate more customer service staff to take calls and hand off calls to an outsourced provider during peak times
- Reduced the number of helpdesk staff through more effective call management
- Provided the ability to identify increases in customer calls related to specific Belkin products
- Enabled users to make cheap calls to head office in the United States

In mid-2006, Belkin engaged Dimension Data to deploy an integrated IP telephony solution based on the Cisco Unified Contact Center Express (UCCX) platform. The solution, deployed inside Belkin's customer service unit, has reduced overall call costs, improved the reliability of the voice network and ensured the smooth running of the customer call centre.

Client Overview

Belkin International is a global supplier of networking solutions, laptop and media player accessories, firewire and USB cables, and other products that provide computer and consumer electronics users with seamless integration in their homes and while on the move. Since its inception in 1983, Belkin has become one of the fastest growing IT companies worldwide with more than 1,000 employees and sales of US\$1 billion.

The company is headquartered in Los Angeles in the United States, and has offices in Australia, Europe, Latin America, New Zealand, Korea and Hong Kong. In Australia, Belkin is located at Tuggerah on the NSW Central Coast.

Business Challenge

Prior to 2006, Belkin's customer service unit, located at West Gosford on the NSW Central Coast, was running an unreliable IP telephony platform, which offered limited functionality for the growing business. To support its growth, Belkin was moving to a larger office in Tuggerah. "The company was growing from two helpdesk staff to ten and we needed an IP-based telephony system that offered better reporting and could be customised to meet our needs," said Craig Fallone, Systems Administrator, Belkin. "Our existing system was unreliable; each time we made a change to the menu, it would fall over and need to be restarted. We needed new IP telephony infrastructure that would grow with the business," said Fallone.

Solution Provided

In mid-2006, Belkin engaged Dimension Data to design and deploy an IP telephony network based on the Cisco Unified Communications platform. The contact centre solution needed to be flexible enough to accommodate Belkin's growth. The solution provides voice mail, integration with Microsoft Exchange mail boxes and call reporting functions that have helped streamline Belkin's customer call centre operation. The Cisco solution supports 15 customer service

representatives working at Belkin's customer service unit, five staff who take calls from customers across Australia and New Zealand who have questions about the features and functions of Belkin's products, and ten service desk staff who handle support calls. The system's interactive voice response (IVR) selection menu routes calls to different agents based on their skills and product knowledge. As call loads increase, calls can be handed off to an offshore service provider.

"We looked at several vendors but the Cisco solution made sense for a lot of reasons," said Fallone. "Importantly, our offices in the United States and the United Kingdom were also using Cisco so it was good to have the same equipment at all locations."

The Cisco solution could be easily adapted to support the requirements of Belkin's call centre. For example, it has allowed Belkin to easily customise reason codes that explain why a user is logging out of the system.

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Craig Fallone, Systems Administrator, Belkin.

"The competing systems were limited in their ability to offer customisation for everything from reason codes to menu scripts for our call centre," said Fallone.

Belkin's managers take advantage of the call reporting features of the Cisco solution to view the number of customer calls, which options customers were selecting through the system's IVR function and, importantly, monitor the performance of call centre agents. Managers can determine which agents are taking the most calls and whether or not they are addressing the customer's needs within a specified timeframe.

Cisco's Unified Communications Manager software provides integration with Microsoft Active Directory, which allows the phone attendant to look up an individual's name and view the status of their phone to determine whether they are at their desk, on a call or away from the office.

Belkin also uses Cisco's Meet-Me conferencing facility to initiate in-house conferences between several people using a single Cisco IP handset. A 'chat' function built into the solution also allows call centre agents to send instant messages to each other during calls. This feature has helped Belkin achieve a high level of first-time call

resolution within its call centre. The Cisco solution also provides call centre agents with the ability to view how many callers are in the queue, and many other call statistics that help them answer and deal with customer calls faster.

How We Delivered

Dimension Data initiated the project by holding a planning session with Belkin's customer care and technical support managers to determine how the solution would work across the business. Engineers looked at how Belkin's contact centre was functioning throughout the entire call process from the time a caller enters the IVR to the time an agent submits a 'case record' for the call.

Dimension Data began developing call number ranges, menu scripting and call flows at Belkin's former office in West Gosford, just prior to the move to Tuggerah. "Once everything was mapped out, Dimension Data had all our extensions up and running within a few hours," said Fallone. "We came from a small office where there was no conferencing or any of that sort of functionality and after the planning session, we were introduced to certain functions that we never thought were possible."

“The engineers designed a suitable solution from the ground up and gave us direction on how to make the solution work best and where we could be in 12 months time.

“Dimension Data put together a couple of different options and we picked the one we thought best fitted the business.”

Dimension Data also helped Belkin run its IP telephony network across dual sites for one month to ensure all customer calls were answered during the move from West Gosford to Tuggerah. Staff worked from both offices during the transition.

According to Fallone, once the solution was deployed, it provided immediate benefits to the business. “We could easily see the business impact of having a good call routing strategy and the wealth of customer information that can be gathered from a well-designed call centre,” he said.

“Dimension Data engineers went out of their way to ensure the solution was implemented within two months.

Their service was exemplary,” said Fallone. When Belkin moved to its new Tuggerah office, a staff member accidentally damaged a core network switch that supported computers and phones. “Dimension Data organised for a replacement switch from its warehouse within a day,” said Fallone.

“Engineers even gave us their mobile numbers after the installation was complete, which meant that they were on call for us to answer any questions that we had about the system.”

Value Derived

The Cisco UCCX solution has provided Belkin with greater visibility across its call centre, allowing managers to make quick decisions that keep its customer service operation running smoothly.

As the call centre load increases, the system enables Belkin to easily allocate more customer service staff to take calls and hand off overflow calls to the outsourced provider.

It also automatically determines whether the call stays in-house or is passed to the outsourced provider based on which product the caller selects using the IVR function.

“Before we deployed the system, we had around 10 internal helpdesk staff taking calls from customers,” said Fallone.

“Customers could wait up to one hour for service because we were getting too many calls and we didn’t have enough staff. Now if customers are waiting five minutes, the system will automatically route the call to the outsourced provider.

“We have also been able to reduce the number of service desk staff to three and redeploy seven staff to other areas of the business because customer calls are being handled

Solution at a glance

Cisco Unified Communications Manager Cluster

Contact Center Express (UCCX) Contact Management platform

Cisco Unity for voicemail and integration with Microsoft Exchange email boxes

Cisco 7911, 7961 and 7941 IP phones

Cisco Catalyst 2960 Power-over-Ethernet switches and Cisco 2800 Series routers

more effectively and calls are no longer sitting in a queue,” Fallone said.

According to Fallone, being able to change system configurations ‘on the fly’ is another major benefit. “If one of our technical support staff members is on holidays and another is sick, we can easily bring customer care staff online to take calls or push more calls across to our outsourced provider,” he said.

Belkin uses the call reporting features to identify potential problems with certain products and take action to solve them. “For instance, we can see if there has been an increase in customer calls relating to our modems based on the call reports,” said Fallone.

The Cisco UCCX solution also provides ‘call trunking’ capabilities that allow Belkin to make calls from its Tuggerah office to its global headquarters in the United States very cheaply. “It’s actually cheaper for us to call the US than call a local number here so we will make some big cost savings in the long run,” said Fallone.

Belkin is also benefitting from the service and support infrastructure provided by Dimension Data by purchasing a Dimension Data Level 1 Uptime support agreement, which provides around-the-clock support.

“If we have an issue with the system, we can call Dimension Data’s engineers day and night and they will try to solve it within minutes,” said Fallone. “If they can’t solve the issue, it is passed onto Cisco.”