

CASE STUDY

MidAtlantic Farm Credit Unifies 18 Offices with Cisco Unified Communications from Premier Solutions Group

Challenge

Due to a five-company merger, MidAtlantic Farm Credit, a provider of financing for agribusinesses and rural homeowners in the Mid-Atlantic region, was left with 18 offices with disparate networks and phone systems. As a result of the system's inconsistencies, customer service suffered, and the company was under-utilizing available staff.

"We needed to make our whole networking system more manageable and improve communication between our branches. We promised our customers that the merger would bring improvements, and we knew that if we wanted to leverage our larger size, we would have to focus first on keeping our customer service strong," says Tom Truitt, senior vice president and chief information officer of MidAtlantic Farm Credit. "We are a risk-adverse organization, so even though I understood IP communications technology would help us improve our customer service and better utilize staff, we were not totally comfortable with it at that point."

Solution

Truitt met with Cisco Premier Certified Partner, Premier Solutions Group. The Premier team convinced Truitt and MidAtlantic management that IP communications technology and Cisco Unified Communications would best address all of the company's communications goals.

When management looked at what it wanted to accomplish—better customer service, more control of the voice and data network, improved employee productivity, and business continuity—everything pointed back to Cisco Unified Communications.

The Premier team was experienced and was able to deliver a single-source solution, including telecom/ datacom services. Premier Solutions Group recommended a centralized deployment of Cisco Unified CallManager call-processing software and Cisco Unity voicemail with Cisco routers and switches. Cisco Unified IP phones were used throughout the deployment. And because of its single-source solution philosophy, Premier could also broker various telecom and datacom services to meet the needs at MidAtlantic.

Premier Solutions Group designed an implementation plan that would allow the technology to be phased in over 12 months. They identified a pilot region, tested the technology there for three months, and then continued deploying it companywide. "We set up training with Premier," says Truitt, "and very quickly, everyone was fully operational on all the new capabilities. The phones themselves are very intuitive."

System Statistics based on a 5-year term

System Cost

\$138,000

Generated Cash Flow

\$176,725

Payback Period (Months)

36 months

NPV at time of purchase

\$13,124

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(continued)

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Benefits

With all of the MidAtlantic Farm Credit offices now utilizing Cisco Unified Communications, the company and its customers are enjoying the benefits. Customer calls get to the right company individual the first time. Staff is better utilized, particularly at the smaller sites where workload can now easily be shared with other sites if an employee is gone. The solution also serves the company's business continuity goals. They can now easily move staff around, so if there is an office closure for any reason, business can continue as usual.

"I have seen the communication at our company improve with the new solution," says Truitt. "I cannot overstate how something as simple as four-digit dialing has unified our offices. The company has grown 50 percent over the last six years, yet our staffing is lower. I think IP communications technology is one of the things that has enabled that to happen." The company is also enjoying the ability

to make unplanned changes to the system quickly and easily. Previously, moves, adds, and changes were handled by an expensive outside contractor, and it seemed to Truitt as if the company had little control over its own system. Another benefit of the new technology is that long-distance charges between company offices have been eliminated, and they have been able to achieve reduced local costs through the removal of local lines.

And it does not stop there. MidAtlantic Farm Credit is looking forward to integrating its Cisco Unified Communications solution with a CRM product from Microsoft that will document calls, help with quality issues, and further improve its customer service.

"Plus, we have a technology foundation in place to add additional services such as an IP Contact Center and Video-Conferencing," say Truitt. "The flexibility of the system ensures that we can continue to grow and improve our business, without worrying if our systems can keep up with our needs."