



Connections - January 2005

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Bresnan Communication Meets Deadline with Connect

What do you do when you are a national cable TV and Internet service provider building a call center in Billings, MT with a tight budget and even tighter time frame...Call Connect!

Bresnan Communications is a cable television and Internet provider servicing the western United States. When building their new call center in Billings, Bresnan had a simple request; design a highly available voice and data system that would provide maximum uptime while maximizing investment. The

network must handle 288 simultaneous users of Gigabit Ethernet, while providing automatic redundancy in the event of a component failure. The phone system also needed to provide for automatic redundancy, while delivering robust reports and call center features. All this needs to happen on an accelerated time frame of 50 days!

The Connect Group started by installing a solid cabling base of Certified Category 6 cabling. The cable plant was color coded to allow for easy system deployment and to

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First Interstate BancSystem Adopts Standard with The Connect Group

From fiber to copper, voice to video, Connect has emerged as First Interstate BancSystem's first choice in cable and communication structure. Beginning in the winter of 2002, Connect started working with Mike Boyett the corporate security officer with First Interstate, installing cabling for security cameras in one of the Billings locations. Since that time, Connect has partnered with FIB on 36 locations throughout Montana and Wyoming.

After a few small projects driven primarily by Alice Loren, head of voice communications at I-tech, the technical support branch for FIB, Randy Oliver, Connect's project manager assigned to the account, was introduced to Dennis Kilian, Corporate Facilities Officer for FIB. "We were a little nervous in that first

meeting with Mr. Kilian," stated Oliver "this was a great opportunity for The Connect Group to show what we could really provide the First Interstate Bank System." Mr. Kilian agreed to allow Connect to a design-build the structured cabling on a major remodel taking place in Cheyenne.

"The Cheyenne design entailed several challenges" said Oliver, "the bank had to remain operational over the course of three project phases. Beyond that it was critical that we work closely with Fred Heil of MKK Consulting Engineers and LG Electrical, an electrical engineer and an electrical contractor whom we had never met." Connect had to coordinate proactive and reactive resources to the project from a distance of 450 miles. The end of the project had involved Connect

in nearly every aspect of low voltage in the facility, extending beyond voice and data to sound, security and HVAC systems. Connect also was contracted to relocate and configure the existing Avaya Difenity phone system in the new Voice and Data distribution frame. "The project ended up being a real feather in our cap," claims Oliver, "it turned out to be the catalyst that has led to a great relationship with First Interstate."

By the completion of the Cheyenne project, Connect had built more than a structured cabling system. From this project, a First Interstate structured cabling standard was developed. This standard was championed by I-tech, because it brought consistency to the networks they were assigned to work on. Having all the facilities cabled be consis-

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Watts & Associates Streamline with Cisco Voice over IP Network

With offices spread across the United States, keeping in touch with your work force can be frustrating and costly. This was the situation facing Watts & Associates, a Montana based firm with offices in Billings, Bozeman, and Kansas City, as well as several remote workers across the country. Watts & Associates provides research and development as well as statistical analysis on crop information for insurance companies and the United States Government. With a small staff of fifty employees, often times in all corners of the U.S. communication is critical to providing accurate, up to date information.

The Connect Group was contracted to design and implement a voice and data system that would connect all three of the offices, utilizing point-to-point dedicated lines, as well as an encrypted Internet connection. Remote employees would utilize an encrypted Internet connection to connect back to the main office, allowing all users seamless use of the network including both voice and data aspects. In short, create a single network to provide data paths for file and e-mail sharing as well as phone calls.

Connect installed a Cisco IP telephone system that would allow remote users to have their own 4 digit extensions off of

a single PBX type server located in Billings, MT.

Remote offices and users now have Cisco IP telephones that are a single phone system with four digit extensions from any office in the corporation or anywhere there is a high-speed Internet connection.

To prepare the IP infrastructure for voice and data traffic ensuring QoS (Quality of Service), Connect upgraded the routers and switches to new Cisco components. This upgrade allowed all connected branches to have verified call quality. With the upgrade to allow VPN acceleration, all external users can now easily establish connections to the main servers for access to the voice and data services at any Watts and Associates office. Users can contact any one of their employees simply by dialing four digits, eliminating the need to know where each employee is at all times, the corporate directory keeps everyone connected. Users can get their VM off of their Email and their Email off of any phone simply by calling into the system.

With the help of Connect Telephone & Computer Group and a single converged network, Watts & Associates is communicating like a streamlined company should.

What would it look like if your phone system failed?

You probably have never thought much about it, the phone rings you pick it up and do business, consistently, reliably. The phone system you have had for over 10 years now has logged nearly 30,000 hours and the time will come when it stops...then what?

Obviously you would get another phone system, but from who? The first person you find in the phone book? I mean the phone system is down and your clients can't communicate with you, your staff can't call out and each hour is costing you dearly. So who do you turn to?

Time and money are ticking off, of course you want to make a good buying decision but you have no time for research or proactive action, you are stuck in a reactive purchase of a critical component to your business.

Once a purchase is made the average phone system will take three days at a minimum to receive and install...72 hours. How much is that an hour? 50 bucks? 100 bucks, 200 bucks?

It doesn't have to look like this.

If you have a phone system 10 years old or older, a call to Connect may just save you a great deal of heart burn and money!

Money's not all you save with a well planned system.



Bresnan Continued...

simplify future moves, adds and changes. At the center of the structure Connect installed with a robust fiber backbone to seamlessly connect Bresnan's core equipment. "This critical core equipment provides Internet and Cable TV service to thousands of Billings Customers" stated Connect project manager Matt Duray; "We simply had no room for error on this install" On top of the system, Connect provided a 20-year application warranty to ensure continued cost effectiveness for Bresnan.

At the core of the system is a Cisco Catalyst 4510 Bladed Switch. This data switch provides for redundant power supplies and supervisor modules, which ensure maximum uptime. To add security and availability, Connect installed Cisco Pix firewalls and wireless access points. These systems have also been installed redundantly to provide for maximum uptime to support Bresnan's 24/7 operations. The phone system chosen to operate the call center at the new facility is the Aspect. The Aspect provides for redundant call processors to, again, ensure maximum uptime. The Aspect is manufactured specifically for Call Centers, and therefore provides access to all of the features and reporting required by Bresnan.

Bresnan IT Support coordinator, Greg Wheelon, stated that combining the three existing locations under one switching umbrella has resulted in fewer network issues and fewer user complaints. "Our network is running much faster and much more efficiently," said Wheelon "However the key issue at Bresnan is downtime, it simply can not happen here. A system failure would have a profound impact on tech-support and sales for our customers." Wheelon continues "If our network goes down for one day it will take us 6 months to recapture the capitol loss." Under the current system Wheelon stated he and his team is confident that if the system fails in one area there is enough redundancy built in to maintain operation. "The integrity of this system combined with highly responsive support we get from the engineers at Connect really help me sleep at night."

Connect Telephone & Computer Group is very proud to have been a part of the Bresnan team and will continue to work hard to support their call center and operations.

First Interstate Continued...

tently ,will save I-tech and FIB hundreds hours and thousands of dollars in identifying cable locations and increasing network performance.

Network organization and structure is gaining ever-increasing importance, due to the requirements placed on the organization for systems beyond voice and data. This structure not only involves First Interstate but several of its vendors and service providers as well. One of the first service providers to realize the importance of a structured cabling system was Diebold,

Connect Retains Cisco Systems Premier Status

Connect Telephone & Computer Group has once again been named by Cisco Systems as a Premier Partner in the areas of IP Telephony and Wireless Networking. In a world where Certified, Premier, Authorized or Gold are titles thrown to any dealer or VAR who picks up a product line and sells a large enough volume, Premier status is something very different with Cisco Systems. Cisco measures success in three ways; technical innovation & competency, customer satisfaction and of course, profitability. Any company that wishes to receive a Premier Partner status with Cisco must invest heavily in each one of those areas.

CISCO SYSTEMS



**Premier
Certified
Partner**

Each year Connect invests over \$40,000.00 in training and certification to meet technical competency requirements.

These requirements include industry standard certifications like Microsoft Systems Engineer, as well as Cisco certifications that include Cisco Certified Network Associates, Engineers and Professionals. Along with these certifications is rigorous product specific training and lab sessions all designed to ensure complete product knowledge

Cisco also requires a high level of customer satisfaction on each install and requires its partners to provide "Proof of Satisfaction Surveys" quarterly showing that we are meeting customer satisfaction expectations. Finally, partners are required to invest in the technology they sell. Each partner must have a demo facility and configuration lab outfitted with the latest hardware and software versions. It is critical that those who represent Cisco at this level have the technical knowledge, understanding and commitment to bring its advanced technologies to the end user successfully.

First Interstate's security vendor. Within the last 18 months, Connect has installed 36 cable plants for Diebold's video security systems. The structured cable plant combined with Diebold's integrated video system allows corporate security to view any camera on the system in real time. "Connect went way beyond designing our structure standard, they have been instrumental in bringing several of our locations up to that standard", said Mike Boyett, "I would give them an A-plus on the work they have done thus far."

To date Connect has completed new cable plants in Cheyenne and Jackson Wyoming, as well as the new Bozeman facility. Over all Connect has been involved in all 60 First Interstate locations and is currently working on a remodel in Livingston. With the growth of facilities and technology Connect looks forward to a long partnership with the First Interstate family.



**Has your technology
become a juggling act?**

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Here's a Better Way



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