

Connections

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Upcoming Events

- Wednesday March 5th
IP Telephony Seminar
Connect Conference Center.

Rimrock Auto Group Capitalizes Cisco Voice over IP Network

In the first development meeting with Steve Zabawa, Vice president of Rimrock Auto Group, it was made clear that the seven businesses under the Rimrock umbrella must operate as one. The requirements were quite clear; bring 7 separate business with 5 separate voice and data systems spread across three separate campuses together under one integrated network passing voice, data, internet and video. Apply to that network a new Internet based inventory and control system with near zero down time.

To meet the challenge Connect Telephone & Computer Group proposed a technology architecture. Architecture is the development of an environment that enhances the human condition, increases productivity and maintains a logical progression. Cisco Systems AVVID (Architecture for Voice Video & Integrated Data) provided the baseline infrastructure that enabled Rimrock & Connect to build a network that was scale-



able and able to meet current and future business demands. Cisco AVVID delivers the e-business infrastructure and intelligent network services that are essential for rapid deployment of emerging technologies and new Internet business solutions. Under Cisco's AVVID guidelines Connect proceeded with the project in a phased approach.

Phase I consisted of securing and enhancing the base cable structure. Under this phase Connect tested each data cable in all locations to ensure adherence to Category 5e specifications. All cable runs that did not meet specification were replaced and any additional runs required in the project were installed under the newly adopted Category 6 specification. This phase was the critical first step in ensuring a stable, expandable infrastructure. Three locations on the main campus were then connected via fiber with two other locations brought into the network via 11Mb wireless connec-

Connect Keeps Calls Answered for KOA

When Kampgrounds of America sat down with The Connect Group last year they had a real dilemma, an estimated 30% of all calls they were receiving at their campgrounds were either lost, abandoned or unanswered. This meant that thousands campers annually were not getting the information they needed to reserve a space or plan their next visit.

The challenge faced was two fold; First

KOA prides itself on the fact that its franchises are independent businesses, with each business owner setting their own open and close dates and running their business their way. Finding a single system that would fit the personality of over 500 franchisees was all but impossible. Second the "canned" reservation systems on the market ranged from \$200,000 and up.

Rimrock Continued...

tions. The remaining remote locations, Rimrock Chrysler and Rimrock's Downtown location were tied back to the main campus via Qwest provided T1 lines.

Phase II consisted of placing the core function of the network. Routing and switching gear was introduced that would provide data, call and video services. At the heart of the call services is Cisco's Call Manager. Call Manager is the software-based call-processing component of the Cisco IP telephony solution. The software extends telephone features and functions to packet telephony network devices such as IP phones, media processing devices like PC's, voice-over-IP gateways (routers), and multimedia applications. Additional data, voice, and video services such as unified messaging, multimedia conferencing, collaborative contact centers, and interactive multimedia response systems interact with the IP telephony solution through Cisco Call Manager's open telephony application programming interface (API).

Phase III consisted of securing data inside and outside of the network. Redundant PIX 506E firewalls were

placed at the main campus and the Chrysler location securing each Internet entry point. The security platform was set to allow secure inbound access for partners via secure VPN tunnels and offsite login for employees from remote locations.

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The end result is a single network that handles all data, voice and video services. The ability to build and manage one network saves Rimrock Auto Group an estimated \$2,500.00 each month. Calls are handled and distributed by two receptionists for all 7 locations with the ability to call or page any person within the organization from any location throughout the organization. Manage-

ment of the network now falls to a single point of contact within the Rimrock Auto Group rather than to 3 different contracted service providers. The IT manager now manages the network from a PC in his office using a windows based interface, this give Rimrock the ability to provide moves adds and changes on the fly in real time without having to down the network or move to a central location.

Why Certification Matters...

The issue of certification and its importance has been a topic of debate since I entered into the communications business in 1986. There are those that argue that a technical certification is not worth the paper it is written on, a valid argument in some instances, and others that pursue certification as if a Holy Grail. Whichever side of the argument you may fall on it is fair to say that technical certifications have gained an importance here-to-fore unmatched in information and communication technology.

Certification provides an industry standard, a commitment to a level of knowledge and learning that can be relied upon. Like a professional license, certification offers a structured, reliable evidence of skills. Certification exams are built on rigorous and standardized criteria, and are often recognized internationally. Certifications are the best professional credential in information technology. It is a means for the information technology profession; the industry and other interested communities to identify skilled technicians and qualified service providers.



While state laws do not regulate technical certifications, and courseware can vary widely, certification exams, primarily in the Cisco and Microsoft realm have become the standard. Since certification is voluntary, it represents not only compliance with established standards, but also a special personal commitment to quality and professionalism. The IT professional that continually pursues certification has committed to be on the front edge of their chosen field of expertise. Certification shows a commitment to, and an embracing of, the evolution of technology, which is its very nature.

Most of us would not allow an unregistered builder to build our home, or employ an uncertified mechanic to fix our car. We wouldn't even consider an unqualified dentist to work on our teeth. Certainly we should not allow an uncertified technician to design, implement or maintain the central nervous system of our business, it's communication systems. At Connect Telephone & Computer Group we take technical certification very seriously. Minimum certification is a

Certification Continued...

requirement to come on board, continuing certification is a requirement to stay on board.

The following is a list of certifications held by the Connect team:

Randy Begger

CCDA – Cisco Certified Design Associate

CCNA – Cisco Certified Network Associate

IPTELEPHONY DESIGN SPECIALIST

VODAVI SYSTEMS

VODAVI PATHFINDER (ONLY ONE IN THE COMPANY)

LUCENT COPPER AND FIBER

3COM IP TELEPHONY

Ron Robinson

EXECUTONE IDS

VODAVI

CISCO PSE IPT

IP TELEPHONY

SOUND ADVANTAGE VOICE MAIL

3COM NBX

Mark Coxwell

CCNA – Cisco Certified Network Associate

Andy Wilson

USAF- Communications Cable Systems Technology Certificate

MSUB- Network Systems Technology Certificate

Scott Huck

A+

CCNA - Cisco Certified Network Associate

Microsoft Certified Professional Windows XP

Microsoft Certified Professional Windows 2000 Server

Brian O'Loughlin

Associate in Applied Science – Industrial Electronics U of M College of Technology

Vodavi Triad

Vodavi Dispatch

Vodavi Discovery ACD

Vodavi Discovery IP

Mitel SX-100/200 Analog

Mitel SX-200 Digital

Mitel ISDN Gateway

Cisco CCNA - Cisco Certified Network Associate

Cisco CCNP- Cisco Certified Network Professional

Cisco CIPT

Cisco DQOS

Comdial DXP

3Com NBX

KOA Continued...

The solution would have to be easy and familiar to campers yet flexible enough to provide varying degrees of function to the campgrounds. The Connect Group provided a solution based on simplicity and function, one that would provide the familiarity of a basic voice-mail system and leverage the Internet for extended function and flexibility. Connect designed and houses the new system at its Billings location and has received over 200,000 calls since its install, dropping the lost call percentage from 30% to less than 6%.

"The Connect Group continually provides the type of service and support that holds KOA in the highest regard. Your team did an excellent job of quickly and professionally bringing the KOA Switchboard on line. Building a partnership with The Connect Group has been a positive experience and we will continue to look to you as technology projects emerge"

-Jim Rogers
President/CEO
Kampgrounds of America Inc.



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Waggoner Trucking Begins Deployment of Nation Wide IP Voice Solution

"Long distance was the driving force in our decision to go to an IP based telephone system" stated Mark Lawler IS/IT Director for Waggoner Trucking. That combined with basic functions like 4 digit dialing and the real possibility for cost effective video conferencing along with an aggressive return on investment model made an IP based system a no brainer.

With numerous locations throughout the United States, Waggoner's is a picture perfect fit for an integrated IP telephony network. The savings in long distance charges alone will meet the return on investment criteria within a 12 to 18 month window and the ability to layer video and data services over the same network simply defines integration for Waggoner's.

Waggoner's chose the NBX solution by 3Com sighting it's ease of setup and price point. Supporting the 3Com NBX Voice endpoints is a Cisco powered network utilizing 3600 and 2600 series routing combined with Cisco's enterprise class of network switches.

The ability to be self sufficient in a short amount of time was a key requirement of Waggoner's. "It is critical that the client be able to go on site and install this system themselves" said

Randy Oliver account manager for Connect. To fill this criteria Randy Begger, Connects Sr. IP engineer, worked closely with Mark Lawler guiding him through the required routing and dial plans, system setup and implementation criteria. With this "on the job" approach Begger and Lawler have rolled out the first three locations, Billings and two Houston TX locations with the remaining locations coming online throughout the year.

Keep your mind open to change all the time. Welcome it. Court it. It is only by examining and reexamining your opinions and ideas that you can progress.

-Dale Carnegie