Meriplex Data and Voice Services Combined with Cisco Unified Communications Connects Tilson Home Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TILSON HOME CORPORATION
- Custom Home Builder
- Houston, TX, USA
- 150 employees and 13 offices

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Outdated network infrastructure
- Inconsistent phone systems across its 13 office locations
- Inability to reliably communicate with offices and remote employees in real-time

DATA/VOICE SOLUTION
- Meriplex MPLS Network
- Meriplex ESIP Voice Service

NETWORK SOLUTION
- Cisco BE6000 Server (1)
- Cisco Communications Manager 10.x
- Cisco Utility Connection 10.x
- Cisco Instant Messaging and Presence 10.x
- Cisco Unified Contact Center 10.x
- Cisco 2921 Voice Gateway Router
- Cisco 2960X Switches
- H323/SIP on Cisco Voice Gateway

BUSINESS RESULTS
- Decreased monthly telecommunications costs
- Upgraded network infrastructure
- Uniform internal phone systems
- Real-time remote communication capabilities

Customer Profile: Tilson Home Corporation is a custom home builder that serves only the state of Texas. With roughly 13 offices and 150 employees continuously building across the state, Tilson has been building homes for Texans for more than 80 years and has come to earn a reputation of trust, reliability and quality.

Situation

With only 150 employees building homes across the entire state of Texas, it is crucial that real-time communication is consistently available.

Before beginning the Cisco network and unified communications installation with Meriplex, Tilson Home Corporation knew it wanted to find ways to leverage new technology to streamline some of its business processes and bring all of its 13 disparate offices and remote employees together from a communications standpoint. But, with an outdated network on its last legs, accomplishing this would be challenging.

Chris Alarid, Chief Information Officer at Tilson came to the realization that his company was in desperate need for a true unified communications system for its offices and remote employees by connecting them on the same MPLS network and communication systems for real-time access to one another.

"We don't have the luxury of basing our builders and project managers in trailers in subdivisions during the day to do all their work and call the office," Alarid explained. "Our people are literally driving 400 to 500 miles a day to the job sites throughout the state, so they needed a way to connect on the road or from inside a home they were building."

Solution

To address this challenge, Tilson Home Corporation enlisted the help of Cisco Gold Partner and global voice and data provider Meriplex Communications, who served as a total solutions provider. Adam Richardson, Professional Services Manager at Meriplex and his team of Cisco-only professionals jumped in with both feet.

"Although this was not Meriplex's first real estate project, it was our first with a residential home builder specifically," Richardson said. "It was clear from the start that their voice and data strategy was in need of an enhancement. Truthfully, whatever they had previously just wasn't working and I would say that aging technology was the source of many of Tilson Home's problems. As a result, it was a difficult task to collaborate between all of their building locations and people."

Alarid defined three main objectives in overcoming Tilson Home's remote communication, network, and telecom hurdles.

"When looking at this from the remote employee's standpoint, we really wanted to enable them to be connected to the office in real-time. Then, when considering the network side, we wanted to get our network upgraded to newer technology to allow us to run more advanced applications for customer interface," Alarid explained.

The third objective planned to address Tilson Home's telecom issue. Before working with Meriplex, Tilson Home had 13 separate phone systems – meaning that no two offices had the same system in place. This not only cost Tilson Home immense amounts of unnecessary money, but it also increased the likelihood for operational and administrative mistakes, "We had huge expenses related to interoffice calling – to the tune of ten to twelve thousand dollars a month in long distance," Alarid said.

The solution? – Meriplex gave their network and unified communications system a complete facelift. By installing a Meriplex MPLS network and centralized ESIP voice solution along with a Cisco BE6000 Server, Communications Manager, Unity Connection, Instant Messaging, Unified Contact Center, and POE switches, Tilson Home Corporation was able to overcome its longstanding challenges.

"It wasn't a question of if Cisco was the right solution, it was really about finding the right partner," Alarid said when reflecting on his decision to go with Meriplex for this project. "Cisco was the right product because it is the only one that, in my opinion, offers the enterprise services for a small business like us."

"Once Tilson Home made up their mind on Cisco products, there was a level of comfort and trust in going with Meriplex, a total solution provider," Richardson explained.

Throughout the entire project, Meriplex's attentiveness and caring service pleased Tilson Home.

"For us (Tilson Home), being treated like that is not something we have experienced before. Some of our vendors are quite large and we are a very small speck on their radar, whereas with Meriplex, we may still be a small speck but they don't make us feel that way," Alarid said.

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Business Results

Since Meriplex completed the project in January 2015, Tilson Home's network infrastructure and communication capabilities have immensely improved. With Tilson Home's upgraded network infrastructure, its 13 offices and remote employees can now complete their paper work electronically and access the necessary materials related to those items in real-time. On top of that, all offices are now on a single platform – allowing them to leverage this new Cisco infrastructure and phone system for all of their interoffice communications.

Alarid explained that he measures the success of this implementation in two ways – in dollars and user experience – and he feels that they have succeeded in both areas. "We see cost-savings on our telecommunications, which is a huge relief. But more importantly, we have received nothing but positive feedback from our employees," Alarid said, "You can put in the best product in the world but if your user community doesn't use it or doesn't like it then it's a failure."

And, now that Tilson Home has the right network infrastructure in place, it plans to start building its customer and warranty portals in order to offer a differentiated service from its competitors. "We would not have been able to accomplish our future goals with our former network. And we wouldn't have been able to even take the next steps to start them without this successful project," Alarid said.

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