Specialty Retailer Eliminates Network Outages and Enhances Employee Productivity

A Pennslyvania-based fabrics and furniture retailer helps customers create great rooms and homes by offering decorative fabrics, custom window treatments, furniture, bedding and more. Their clientele has high expectations and expects the best, so understandably when their network failed to fit their pattern of excellence, it was time to find a partner that could match their reputation.

The Challenge

The customer has wisely recognized trends in design and home furnishings, and has successfully adapted to them over time. They expanded from primarily fabric sales with the addition of custom window treatments, upholstered furniture and other services. Their upscale consumer and trade customers have come to count on the company's free design services and luxury fabrics at discount prices across all retail locations and online.

For the company's CIO, this change in their retail marketing model was a key driver for upgrading the firm's legacy systems, which were failing to keep up with the shifting needs of their corporate and store personnel. The company's antiquated, on-premises PBX phone systems—which were no longer supported by the manufacturer—caused 3-4 outages per month that lasted up to a week.

As business moved from in-store to online, bandwidth needs were growing, but their existing MPLS network with 'skinny' T1's struggled to maintain application performance, resulting in a poor user experience for employees and customers. Their MPLS network also lacked redundancy, so if a circuit went down, they were unable to process orders.

> "OfficeSuite UC has given us a reliable phone system that's easy to manage, easy to use and has delivered significant cost savings."
>
> — CIO
>   Specialty Retailer

Customer at a glance

Industry
Specialty retail (decorative fabrics and furnishings)

Customer Description
Headquartered in Pennslyvania
1,600 employees
Retail locations across 27 states

Challenges
Insufficient bandwidth
Poor application performance
Antiquated PBX phone systems
Limited staff to manage multiple vendors

Solutions
SD-WAN
OfficeSuite UC®
OfficeSuite HD Meeting®
Broadband and LTE access

Results
Eliminated network outages
Reliable phone and collaboration services
Network and voice visibility and control
Significant cost savings

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The Solution

The company's CIO knew it was time to make transitioning to the cloud a priority. To start, we recommended OfficeSuite UC® to replace the antiquated on-premises phone system. It is easier to manage and delivers a consistent user experience at all locations. Features like call-forwarding and auto-attendants make a major impact by ensuring incoming customer calls route to the correct person faster, improving sales and the customer lifecycle.

The company can also send voicemail transcriptions to one or more email accounts. When their stores are closed, managers know immediately if a customer leaves a message and can get back to them relatively quickly.

When travel suspended due to COVID-19, we also recommended OfficeSuite HD Meeting® so regional managers could continue to keep in contact with their store managers. According to the CIO, "Everyone is wondering why we weren't using this tool before since our field management team is quite dispersed across the country."

For resiliency and redundancy, we recommended the customer replace their T1s with our SD-WAN solution, offering high bandwidth broadband cable or Ethernet as the primary connection. Cellular broadband provides backup in an active/passive configuration providing and managing both broadband connections. Moreover, our Proof-of-Concept included OfficeSuite UC® that clearly demonstrated the superior performance and resiliency of an SD-WAN solution.

The Results

Our customer's transformation from multiple vendors to a single-managed service provider removes the complexity of managing their communications platform. It also significantly reduces the burden on the IT staff, who now have more time to spend on innovative projects designed to increase revenue and customer experience.

The company has seen a significant improvement in the customer experience with the implementation of cloud-based OfficeSuite UC. Frequent outages and long periods of downtime are a thing of the past in the stores. And not to mention, OfficeSuite HD Meeting® has improves employee productivity across the chain.

With SD-WAN, the days of network outages and waiting for help to arrive are gone. When one of the stores lost the primary cable connection, the wireless backup was so seamless that the store continued to operate for several days without being aware the cable connection was down.

Lastly, the customer portal has been an added benefit that gives IT personnel network and application visibility and control. With the online portal, the IT team can easily and routinely update application priorities, create and track trouble tickets, assess performance and manage phone settings for all their locations, without having to go to each location to program the system.

"We really needed and benefitted from doing this implementation," said the CIO. "Throughout the project, their approach stayed the same—never dropping the ball while keeping the whole project on track and leading us through the process."

"The most substantial shift has been the heavy adoption of OfficeSuite HD Meeting to support our remote working environment."

— CIO
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