



Leading design firm turns to Netarx for enterprise Cisco communications solution

Customer Profile

Founded in 1945, SHW Group is a leading educational architecture and design firm with 425 employees distributed across seven studios located in Texas, Virginia and Michigan. The firm shapes sustainable environments that profoundly impact society through dedication to the architectural craft, learning and stewardship while leveraging knowledge, research, ingenuity and the celebration of ideas.



Situation

SHW Group believes in creating learning places where ideas are sparked, minds are engaged and future leaders are molded. This mission doesn't just apply to the firm's client projects — the company is also committed to creating an internal culture and working spaces that are conducive to employees' personal innovation and achievement. One strategy SHW has employed to accomplish this goal is providing the company with user-friendly and streamlined communications technologies. For example, the firm recently addressed the company's internal enterprise communication architecture that was comprised of antiquated PBX systems and an undersized wide area network (WAN).

"Each of our offices had its own, completely unique communications platform with its own configuration, support and warranty challenges," says Bob Rayes, director of advanced resources, SHW Group.

"Anytime you'd visit another office, you had to navigate a new phone system. And because we weren't on a VoIP platform, interoffice calling was expensive.

"Additionally, system management and maintenance was cumbersome and costly. Moves, additions and changes required multiple people to execute them, and the support for each site had to be handled on an individual basis by external local vendors."

Rayes and SHW sought a communication solution that would enhance collaboration among the company's geographically dispersed offices; simplify, unify, and replace multiple legacy systems; and be cost effective both in initial capital outlay and total cost of ownership. The solution also would have to integrate with existing technology, scale to future requirements and include robust support.

In looking for a vendor that could fulfill these requirements, SHW found a perfect fit in Farmington Hills, Michigan-headquartered Netarx, Inc. The Cisco Gold Certified partner founded in 1997 has four offices throughout the Midwest and one in Phoenix, and holds Cisco Unified Communications, Data Center, Wireless, Routing/Switching, and Security specializations.

Solution

Netarx began the four-month implementation in May 2007, installing Cisco Unified Communications. The IP-based solution enables SHW employees, business partners and customers to collaborate with a combination of voice, video, data and mobility applications across multiple workspaces.

For reliable voice services throughout the enterprise, Netarx implemented Cisco Unified Communications Manager, an enterprise-class IP telephony call-processing system that provides traditional telephony features as well as advanced capabilities. To that, Netarx added Cisco Unity, a powerful voice messaging solution, to help increase customer service and enrich employee communications.

Netarx also installed a Cisco wireless local area network (LAN) solution featuring Cisco Wireless LAN Controllers, which work in conjunction with Cisco Aironet access points and the Cisco Wireless Control System (WCS) to provide system-wide mobility services, such as enhanced security, voice, guest access and location services.

Results

SHW now has a unified, reliable and scalable communications platform that satisfies its needs today and can accommodate growth and new requirements down the road.

"What is possible in one location is now possible in all," says Rayes. "The new solution affords better collaboration, awareness and integration throughout our firm. We've simplified and centralized maintenance and management, and cut costs significantly by eliminating multiple phone systems. And with the standard configuration, we can create and edit user accounts in all offices via a simple web interface from virtually anywhere.

In terms of productivity, features like four-digit dialing and tools like presence, extension mobility and enriched voicemail make employees more reachable and more responsive to each other and clients. One call to one number gets to the right employee right away.

"Netarx provides an exceptional level of expert, personal service without layers. I'm confident any issues will be handled promptly and professionally, and we plan to continue partnering with them as we build functionality onto our Cisco platform."

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