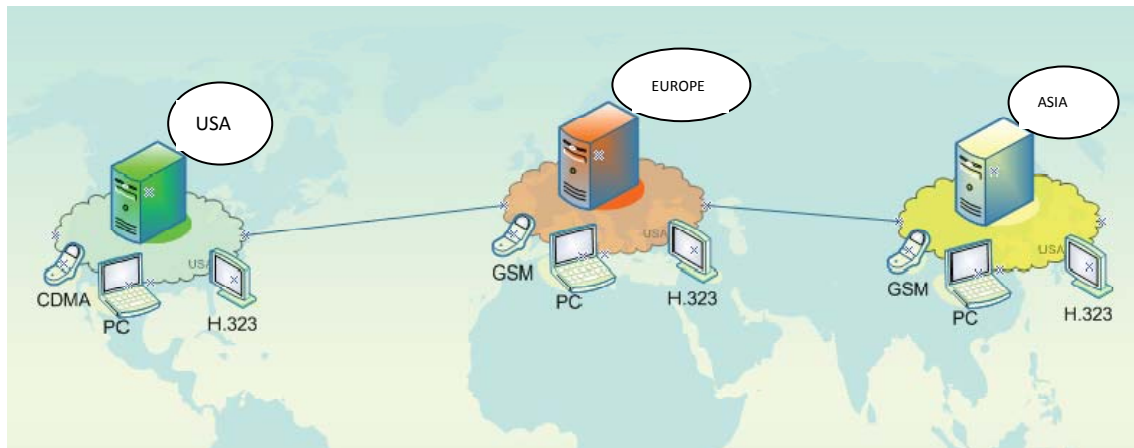


CaseStudy Manufacturing

Unified Communications Helps Manufacturer Get Products Out Faster

A major manufacturer faced increasing challenges in coordinating the work of its geographically dispersed operations. For example, product design groups in Europe need to obtain market information and feedback on new product concepts from team members based on North America. With key contributors based in Europe, North America and Asia, and many often away on business, it might take days to make each of the thousands of connections that might be required to get a typical product to market.



The manufacturer evaluated a number of different unified communications (UC) products. Dialcom Networks' Spontania best met their requirements by delivering a full range of easy-to-access UC capabilities while ensuring that sometimes scarce bandwidth was shared in accordance with corporate policies. Spontania delivers enterprise-grade, premise-based software that enables unified communications and collaboration — seamlessly and securely extending IM, voice, video and data in real-time to any user, over any device or network. The pilot installation was completed in only two days and the UC tool now reaches around 5,000 employees, subcontractors and customers in three continents. Plans exist to expand the tool to the entire organization ecosystem.

Users can now easily send instant messages to their co-collaborators around the world and instantly create conferencing sessions that give participants the ability to view documents and applications in real-time. The result has been a significant improvement in the ability of marketing, product design, manufacturing, finance and other contributors to collaborate with each other. The manufacturer says that the company has identified reductions in time to market and travel expenses have been significantly reduced.

Limitations with previous solution

The manufacturer originally used a web conferencing solution but ran into limitations such as its inability to support video, lack of voice and messaging capabilities, and the inability to support legacy video conferencing equipment. These limitations became even more apparent as the company expanded its operations through acquisitions and organic growth. A project team within the company identified the need for a complete UC solution that integrates the existing IT, telephony and mobile environment to provide advanced IP telephony, audio and video conferencing and instant messaging to desktop and mobile devices.

The project team looked at the leading edge UC solutions and decided to focus on two solutions that seemed to have the most potential. Each of these solutions offered all of the core UC capabilities mentioned above that make it possible to spontaneously enter into collaborative sessions that can be used to solve problems and take advantage of opportunities to get to market faster. In addition, the project team wanted to provide different bandwidth limits for different users and this user categorization needed to be integrated with Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP). The success of a UC application depends on providing meeting users' expectations for communications performance. The manufacturer has bandwidth issues between Europe and Asia and needed a UC solution with the intelligence to react to bandwidth limitations in order to maintain perceived performance.

Superior bandwidth management

The project team determined that Spontania best met the manufacturer's requirements. Spontania authenticates against Active Directory to determine the type of user that initiates the conference and applies bandwidth limits based on the user type. Spontania's adaptive bandwidth management shields users from the effects of network latencies by sensing changes in network and device performance, adjusting compression and cache algorithms in real-time for optimal performance and managing flow control according to individual response requirements. The competitive benchmark determined that the two competing solutions both offered excellent e-meeting capabilities but determined that Spontania was significantly easier to use and received a better overall rating from the project team. For example, Spontania includes software that can wrap video functionality into a simple click and go user experience.

The project team installed Spontania on a dedicated Itanium2 main server in Europe and three satellite servers in Europe, Asia and North America. PCs, laptops and traditional videoconference systems can collaborate together. During these collaborative sessions, multimedia files can be shared in real-time by any user. There are three groups of users. The first group can create sessions that share RDSI quality video; the second group of users share ADSL 2MB quality video and the third group's sessions have access to ADSL 512 video. The whiteboard works in stand-alone mode or integrated with application sharing. The collaboration tools used by the manufacturer include co-browsing, application sharing, and remote control and file transfer.

Faster time to market

In a recent user questionnaire, the manufacturer's UC users rated their experience with the UC solution as good to excellent. They said that the benefits included the ability to more easily establish richer collaborative sessions and save time and expenses associated with travel. The average user has five meetings per month and the average number of participants in each meeting is four. Administration of the UC solution can be performed by end-users with a minimum of training. The ability to instantly establish collaborative sessions with the Spontania UC solution enables users to all view the same information, interactively discuss the business issue, and come to logical conclusions. This new approach streamlines the flow of information throughout the extended enterprise and helps the manufacturer get products to market faster than was possible in the past.