

Membership Organization Improves Caller Experience

U.S Equestrian Federation, Inc. uses Unified Contact Center to help members reach the right person, the first time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
U.S. EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION, INC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit • Lexington, Kentucky • 130 employees
CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve member service • Increase employee productivity • Reduce IT time and costs
SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed Cisco network • Set up a customer care center to replace the old switchboard
RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped members and employees get answers faster • Saved thousands of dollars on cabling and telephone moves, adds, and changes

Challenge

The national governing body of equestrian sport in the United States, the U.S. Equestrian Federation, Inc. (USEF) promotes and regulates equestrian competition. Most of its 130 employees work in the main office in Lexington, Kentucky. Others work in branch offices in New Jersey, Ohio, and New York that provide services relating to drugs and medications, lab testing, and international competitions.

The USEF receives 1000 to 1600 phone calls a week. Questions include membership status, horse-recording status, horse ownership, and competition details. Some questions are urgent, such as finding out if someone at a show is actually eligible to

compete.

Previously, one or two switchboard operators answered all calls, talked to the caller to determine who could best answer the question, and then transferred the call. “The problem was that the switchboard operator could not tell if the expert was on the phone, so members were often transferred right into voicemail,” says Teresa Stephens-Carroll, director of customer care. And members who had more than one question, say, about membership status and horse ownership, typically had to be transferred again. “Members indicated they wanted better service, and our CEO wanted to give them a faster way to talk to a live person,” says Stephens-Carroll.

Solution

When USEF decided to adopt Cisco Unified Communications, Cisco recommended boice.net, a Cisco Certified Silver Partner with advanced specializations in unified communications, wireless, security, and storage. boice.net refreshed USEF’s existing Cisco switches and routers, added a Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance (ASA) that includes firewall and VPN functions, and deployed Cisco Network Assistant, which lets the IT staff securely manage switches from a web browser. boice.net used the Cisco ASA to segment the network to comply with Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security standards, as USEF accepts member credit card payments. Cisco Security Monitoring, Analysis, and Response System (MARS) provides additional security.

The network also acts as the platform for the Cisco Unified Communications solution, which includes Cisco Unified Communications Manager, Cisco Unified IP phones, Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, and Cisco Unified Contact Center. boice.net integrated the system with USEF’s customer database so that customer care center agents can see member histories when they

receive a call. boice.net also trained employees how to set their own presence information and check other employees' presence, forward voicemail, and take advantage of other time-saving features not available on the old private branch exchange (PBX). "Employees became comfortable with the new communications system very quickly," says Ryan Hays, network engineer.

Results

USEF transformed its business processes by setting up a customer care center with agents trained to answer a majority of the members' questions. Cisco® Unified Contact Center routes calls to a knowledgeable agent, lets employees see which coworkers are currently available, and even displays the member's history on the agent's PC screen.

Improved Caller Experience

Members no longer have to explain the nature of their call to an operator. Instead, they listen to a menu of choices and just press a key to be immediately connected to an available agent. If agents cannot answer a member's question, they can use Cisco Unified Personal Communicator software to find an expert in the organization whose presence status is "available," and then either transfer the call or send an instant message. "If the member wants to talk to an employee whose presence status shows they are on the phone, the agent can ask whether the caller would rather be transferred to voicemail or speak to someone else," says Hays. Members appreciate the choice. "In just the first few weeks after we opened the customer care center, we began receiving positive response from members, saying they are happy that they can now get through to a live person," says Stephens-Carroll.

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Increased Employee Productivity

Unified communications saves time for USEF employees, as well. If they see from presence information that a coworker is on the phone, they can just send an instant message instead of leaving a voicemail message. Sending instant messages also reduces the time that employees spend deleting emails to stay within their inbox size limit. And because Cisco Unified Communications integrates with Microsoft Outlook, employees can manage their voicemail messages right in their email inbox, saving the time to check voicemail separately.

The customer care center also reduces the number of phone calls and voicemail messages that departments need to take time out to answer. "The horse recording department is processing requests sooner this year than in previous years because the customer care center handles many of its phone calls," says Stephens-Carroll. "And when members receive their documentation sooner, they aren't calling as often to check on status."

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—Justin Provost, IT Director, U.S. Equestrian Federation, Inc.

Lower IT Costs, More Time for Strategic Projects

The dynamic USEF organization frequently moves cubicles and people. “Cisco Unified Communications makes it easier for IT to keep up because we just connect the phone in the new location,” says James Hurley, senior network engineer. “We have saved thousands of dollars in cabling because offices just need one line for voice and data instead of separate lines.”

The IT staff is using the time that it saves on moving telephone extensions to work on improving business processes, according to Justin Provost, IT director. “The biggest winners from Cisco Unified Communications are our members, who can get their questions answered in a timely manner instead of waiting for a call back,” he says.

Next Steps

USEF is considering connecting its remote offices to the Cisco Unified Communications System to eliminate long-distance toll charges between offices. Employees in any office would also be able to see each other’s presence information. The IT group also wants to use Cisco Unified Applications Environment to develop applications for Cisco Unified IP phones, with the goal of improving business processes. One idea is to use the phone as an executive dashboard, displaying information such as current membership totals.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications, visit:

www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications

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