

From PBX to Cisco Unified Communications: Better Collaboration with Less Cost

Federal government agencies have found a surprising ally in meeting their missions: the humble communications system. "Mission requirements for communications modernization and collaboration make it very compelling for government agencies to migrate from PBX [private branch exchange] systems to unified communications," says David Rubal, federal collaboration regional manager, Cisco. Benefits include lower costs, improved citizen interactions, an empowered mobile workforce, and greater security.

Save Money Every Month

Agencies that adopt unified communications save money in the form of:

- **Lower monthly bills:** Instead of paying separate bills for voice and Internet access, agencies can use a single IP service provider for both, qualifying for more favorable rates.
- **Lower operational costs:** The IT department can manage one centralized unified communications system that serves the entire agency instead of separate PBX systems in each location.
- **Less expensive office moves:** Employees or entire departments that move to a new location can simply reconnect their Cisco IP phones in the new location, saving service provider fees of \$75 to \$200 for each move, add, or change.

"Agencies often pay back the investment in unified communications in less than one year," Rubal says.

Improve Citizen Interactions

Unified communications can enhance the citizen experience with government. For example, suppose a citizen calls with a question about an entitlement program, and the employee needs information from a colleague to answer the question. With a unified communications capability called presence, an employee in one agency can quickly find an available expert in the same or a different agency to get the answer while the citizen is still on the phone. Having found an available expert, the employee can send a secure instant message or set up an impromptu voice, video, and web conference.

Unified communications also gives the agency a foundation to set up intelligent contact centers that can route calls to the first available agent with the needed skills, such as a foreign language. The agent can be in any location, including home.

Empower a Mobile Workforce

Unified communications extends an agency's voice and voicemail services to employees in the field, at home, or in military theaters of operations. Employees can use their smartphones or a laptop to securely access the same voice and voicemail services they would have at headquarters, including an agency directory, coworkers' presence status, office voicemail, and collaboration tools. Providing advanced collaboration and mobility tools, including business video, helps government become more attractive to new college graduates, who were reared on these technologies and expect them in the workplace.

The mobility advantages are particularly valuable in the Department of Defense. "Unified communications is a network service, so it's part of the department's journey to 'Everything over IP,'" Rubal says. Historically, telephony technicians had to arrive weeks before troops with a planeload of equipment to hard-wire phones and deal with cabling distribution. A unified communications system, in contrast, has a much smaller footprint and takes advantage of the IP-based tactical network. Technicians can rapidly deploy communications and more quickly move, add, and change services as mission requirements evolve.

Treat Agency Voice Traffic as Securely as Data Traffic

When an agency adopts unified communications, voice traffic rides over the same IP network as the agency's application traffic and receives the same security treatment. This can include encryption, access controls, detailed reports, and more.

Transition Smoothly

With thorough planning and assistance from an experienced partner, agencies can make the transition from PBX systems to unified communications without disrupting citizen services. The shift doesn't have to be all at once; in fact, many agencies transition departments or buildings one by one. "Moving a large agency to a new location would take months in a PBX environment, compared to days in an IP environment," Rubal says.

Best of all, IP telephony is just the first step in building better government through collaboration. Governments that adopt Cisco Unified Communications technology have the platform to later introduce advanced collaboration tools such as business video, multi-channel contact centers, self-service voice portals, Cisco WebEx, and Cisco TelePresence.

To read about secure Cisco Unified Communications solutions for government, visit:

www.cisco.com/web/strategy/government/usfed_unified_comm.html




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