

Blue Mountains Residents Benefit From Council's Move to Internet Platform

End-to-end Cisco Solution and Wireless IP Phones Installed at Libraries, Pools and Offices

SYDNEY, Australia, Nov. xx, 2006 - The Blue Mountains City Council has deployed a Cisco® Unified Communications network solution to improve customer service at its Katoomba contact centre, increase staff productivity, and reduce operational costs.

The Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC), based in Katoomba, serves 26 townships spread across a wide mountainous region. It has approximately 550 staff and operates a call centre with up to 10 seats to answer community enquiries and handle requests. The council operates two business centres, two depots, six libraries and five aquatic facilities across the local government area.

Warwick Purdy, the manager of information and customer services, said: "We have rationalised our network infrastructure by merging our separate voice and data networks by using Cisco networking technologies. We have also reduced our costs in managing telephone system moves and changes by the use of a common Internet Protocol infrastructure and the functionality of a centralised IP telephone system. Essentially, we see this network as a platform for rolling out future services in ways which we simply could not under old-world systems."

To help reduce operational costs and improve customer service, the BMCC has deployed Cisco Unified Communications technology, based on the deployment of 430 Cisco Unified IP Phone 7940G, 7960G and 7970G handsets. The Unified Communications solution helps BMCC respond more efficiently to the needs of Blue Mountains citizens by allowing staff to exploit the easy-to-use large feature list associated with the Unified Communications system.

For instance, BMCC's call centre operators can now provide better service by using the phones to identify how long callers have been in the queue and to track the call history if the call is referred back to the call centre from within the organisation.

The council is also making innovative use of 35 Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7920 handsets. The wireless phones are used at various council-operated Aquatic Centres, libraries and council offices. The wireless phones provide better coverage within the sites than conventional portable phones and allow staff to roam between sites while retaining their telephone extension.

Ross Fowler, Cisco Australia and New Zealand managing director, said; "Local municipalities such as Blue Mountains City Council have a wide range of community services to perform. They are taking advantage of networked-based communications not only to reduce the costs of performing those services, but also to take interactions with staff and the community to a new level by taking an architectural approach to their communications system."

The network that underpins the Unified Communications solution features Cisco 2800 Series routers, Cisco Catalyst® 4500 and 3500XL Series Switches and Cisco Aironet® 1200 Series wireless access points. The network is forming the platform for a whole range of new applications, including Cisco Unified Video Advantage and MeetingPlace® Express conferencing solution. This is a complete rich-media solution that integrates voice, video and Web conferencing capabilities to make remote meetings as natural and effective as face-to-face meetings.

MeetingPlace Express is allowing councillors, who, due to other commitments, may not always be available to attend briefing sessions at the council's Katoomba headquarters to stay informed by actively participating in presentations and interactive question-and-answer sessions.

Allcom Networks, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner, helped the council deploy the Cisco Unified Communications solution, which is based on an end-to-end Cisco network.

Ben Vincent, the account manager at Allcom Networks, said: "The council is benefiting from all of the cost and productivity benefits inherent in switching to a Cisco Unified Communications solution."

About Cisco

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About Blue Mountains City Council

The Blue Mountains City Council is based in Katoomba, New South Wales, and serves 26 townships in a local government area of 1,433 square kilometres. The townships are situated from 50 to 120 km west of Sydney, within 1,000 square kilometres of World Heritage-listed National Park.

The council provides services such as bushfire and emergency services, waste management, cultural services and roads maintenance. It operates five Aquatic Centres, six libraries and two works depots.

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