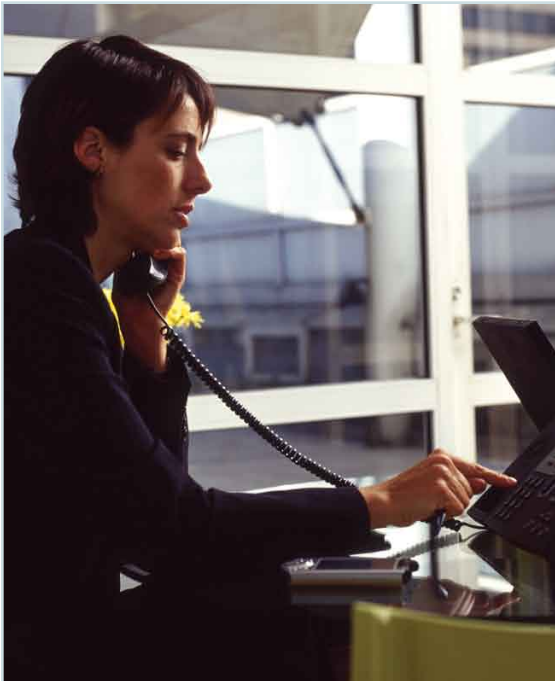


New Horizons Credit Union Adopts Cisco Unified Communications from TekLinks Across All Branch Locations



New Horizons Credit Union, with headquarters in the Mobile, Alabama area, needed to improve communications among its branches and also make it easier for employees to work at different locations. It was difficult for employees to work at other branches as needed, because when they went to a new location, they would have to be assigned a new extension or phone number, making it difficult for members to reach them. The employees also found it difficult to adjust to the different phone systems at each of the branches.

The credit union's vice president of IS worked with Cisco Partner TekLinks to deploy a test site of Cisco Unified Communications at a new branch. The test site was so successful that Cisco Unified Communications will now be deployed across the entire organization, allowing it to tie its call center into its member account information so that each member call can be serviced immediately.

New Horizons Credit Union was founded in 1950 in Mobile, Alabama, and since then has opened five branches to serve its growing membership. Today its 70 employees serve approximately 25,000 members, with new branch openings planned to accommodate further growth.

As typical for many growing SMB-sized organizations, New Horizons opened a new branch office when needed, and deployed a new phone system with that office. However, company growth and the limits of the PBX (private branch exchange) phone systems were interfering, rather than helping, with interoffice communications.

"We were having problems with equipment we use with our current PBX to allow VoIP," says John Gable, vice president of information systems for New Horizons Credit Union. "Lines would drop, and it was difficult to get support for the equipment. Also, our loan employees and tellers often move to different branch offices, depending on current service needs. We would arrange a move, and they would have to have a new number or extension, making it difficult for clients to reach them." Gable likes the credit union's technology to be updated and current. With Cisco networking technology already in place, he started exploring Cisco Unified Communications.

"All these different systems were trying to communicate with each other, and each branch had a different voicemail system," says John Gable, vice president of information systems for New Horizons Credit Union. "Lines would drop, and it was difficult to get support for the equipment. Also, our loan employees and tellers often move to different branch offices, depending on current service needs. We would arrange a move, and they would have to learn a new voicemail, and they would have a new number or extension, making it difficult for clients to reach them." Gable likes the credit union's technology to be updated and current. With Cisco networking technology already in place, he started exploring Cisco Unified Communications.

Executive Summary

Industry

- Financial

Business Challenge

- Facilitate communications among branches
- Make it easier for loan and member service employees to work at other branches

Network Solution

- Unified Communications and voice mobility solutions

Business Value

- Easier, less expensive deployment to new branches
- Ease of mobility for employees
- Faster, more complete member service with just one call

"I had followed VoIP technology from its beginning and knew how much Cisco had moved the technology forward," he says. "I talked with a local hospital that had deployed Cisco Unified Communications, and they were very happy with the technology."

Gable decided to deploy Cisco Unified Communications on a test basis at a new branch being opened in nearby Foley, Alabama.

For the technical expertise and guidance that he needed for such an implementation, Gable turned to Cisco Gold Certified and SMB Select Partner TekLinks.

"Cisco is the accepted standard for IP telephony technology, and I wanted to work with a company that was dedicated to Cisco technology," says Gable. "I liked the work TekLinks did for other clients, I liked their engineers, and I liked that they are an all-Cisco business. It means that they know the technology inside and out."

Founded in January 2001 in Birmingham, Alabama, TekLinks created its practice on the principle that service, rather than product, is what makes an integration business successful.

"SMBs want to do more with less," says Nancy Rockett, corporate account manager at TekLinks. "Few SMBs can afford a complete phone system replacement at all of their sites. What drives change is often new regulations or security issues, and the SMBs do not always have the luxury of seeing a new system as a long-term investment. They need to see what it will return very quickly."

The integration that Cisco provides with its unified communications devices is great, Rockett continues, because it allows SMB-sized companies to gain entry into technology that they otherwise would not have access to or felt was too major of an investment. A Cisco converged network provides a platform for applications that are easily added when a small-but-growing business needs it, providing extra value in the network investment.

Rockett says that Gable wanted the credit union to have a constant telephone connection with no network system lockups or lost phone connections.

"We showed him how a converged voice and data network is easier to manage, and the ease of mobility that employees would have with Cisco Unified Communications," she says. "He really wanted to deliver something great to the credit union employees. He wanted it to be really easy for them to communicate between locations and not have to learn a new phone system at each branch location."

Because not all of New Horizon Credit Union's branches were newly constructed, the organization assumed a wide variety of wiring and existing technology in place at different locations. It was critical to Gable that the solution that TekLinks recommended and deployed be easily and inexpensively deployed to new branches, so that he would no longer have to contend with the jumble of technology.

"I am a one-man IT department, so the solution had to deliver high quality and consistent use among all of our branches, but also be easy to roll out to new branches," says Gable.



"The Cisco name gives me assurance that we will have in place the best voice and data network available, and that its high-quality technology is easily deployed at new branches as we continue to expand."

To determine if Cisco Unified Communications was the right solution for the credit union, Gable arranged approval to deploy it at the new Foley branch. Rockett and the TekLinks team recommended a 2811 voice bundle and Cisco Unified IP Phones 7960G and 7940G.

Gable found that the test site at the new branch went very well, saying the solution was very reliable and completely met his expectations.

"We opened this new branch with Cisco Unified Communications, and it has been a great experience," says Gable. "TekLinks did a fantastic job of interfacing the system with our Lucent PBX product so that calls can be transferred easily and we can page people if we need to." The test site went so well that Gable has asked Rockett and TekLinks to generate a bid to replace the credit union's entire phone system with Cisco Unified Communications, and expects the remainder of the branches, as well as a brand new branch, to be deployed by early 2007. When completely deployed across the entire organization, Cisco Unified Communications will enable the credit union to have a call center option that ties into its financial application. This way, when a credit union loan or member service employee receives a call from a member, he or she can tie that call into an account and bring up that member's account information.

"By tying our call center system into our account information, we can reach our ultimate goal of servicing each member call immediately," says Gable. "Customer service is critical to our business, and Cisco Unified Communications will allow us to serve our customers in personal and powerful ways."