

Case Study



Arc Solutions Provides a centrally controlled operator center solution to Heffernan Group



HEFFERNAN INSURANCE BROKERS
A Member of the Heffernan Group

Profile

Heffernan Insurance Brokers, formed in 1988, is one of the largest independent insurance brokerage firms in the United States. Heffernan provides comprehensive insurance and financial services products to a wide range of businesses and individuals. Headquartered in Walnut Creek, California, Heffernan has a number of additional offices across the US.

An industry leader, Heffernan is ranked highly for its presence in the insurance industry, and for its commitment to philanthropy in the communities it serves. The company has built its reputation and success as a leader in niche practice business, with a foundation in non-profits, technology, healthcare, hospitality, construction, and property owners. Now, with 9 branch offices and 330 staff, Heffernan's reach spans almost every industry.

The Challenges

With an overall emphasis on customer service excellence, communication has always been a key element to the success of the company. A positive staff attitude is also key, with the mission statement of "answer the phone and have fun" being reinforced at every opportunity.

Whilst effective, this solution was not ideal as the company's main aim was to ensure that all customers were dealt with personally by the operators. Having separate telephone systems serving each site also provided challenges, with the infrastructure being inflexible and a high systems management overhead. It also meant that operators had to be deployed to cope with the incoming traffic of that particular branch office, with no capability to share the load with other offices in busier times.

Heffernan therefore decided to move to a single centralized communications platform, serving all sites. They chose Cisco Unified Communications technology as it delivered the power, flexibility and reliability to serve the whole business and its customers, both now and in the future. Whilst this provided an excellent platform for unifying communications across the enterprise, additional functionality was still required in order to deal with customer calls.

"every call, every time is answered by a friendly human voice."

John Petersen, CIO of Heffernan Group

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The Solution

Arc Solutions was chosen by Heffernan to provide this additional functionality, due to its pedigree in being the provider of choice for operator solutions, designed exclusively to integrate to Cisco Unified Communications platforms. Arc was able to provide a centrally controlled operator centre solution, delivering a software based switchboard capability to 8 operators across Heffernan's offices.

The Results

The delivery of the Arc solutions proved to bring great benefit to customers, the 330 employees, their managers and the front line operator staff. Firstly, the system allowed virtualization, thus sharing the load of call answering across sites. This meant that personnel resources could be used more efficiently, the automated system was no longer required, and call waiting times were lowered. This virtual concept has increased flexibility in branch opening hours, with callers being seamlessly transferred to other operators.

Arc's ability to label call queues has ensured that operators provide the correct local branch greeting, wherever the call is answered.

Visibility of staff availability had always been an issue with the previous system, with many calls failing to reach the right person first time, and voicemail being a common destination. With the combinations of Cisco's networking and Arc's advanced integration to the Cisco platform, operators can instantly access information relating to staff availability via the operator console directory. Arc Presence has also been deployed, enabling key staff to set their status via their Cisco telephone. Options such as 'on vacation' and 'do not disturb' all add to the rich layer of information that Heffernan's operators now have at their disposal. This contact information is also complemented by the addition of 'notes' against individual's names, and also alternate contacts, should they be unavailable.

System managers and supervisors have found that the Arc system is not only extremely flexible in terms of call routing and information, but the management and

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reporting capabilities are equally impressive. Using Arc Supervisor, IT staff and customer service managers can change call routing and preferences, as well as monitor the performance of operators and call queues, to ensure that service levels are being met.

Call costs were also an issue, with a high level of calls between sites. The existing system meant that these calls had to be routed via the public telephone network.

Lack of visibility of staff status also meant that many of these calls were unsuccessful first time, therefore needing a second call to an alternate contact, or a call back. The new Cisco solution resolves this issue by providing a single network, with lower cost links between branches. Arc's ability to monitor telephone extension status across the system also means that calls aren't even attempted unless the operator can see that someone is available. The combination of this functionality has saved call costs, improved efficiency and resulted in improved customer service.

Arc Enterprise has proved extremely popular with operators, users and system managers alike.

"The Arc Enterprise solution has been a fantastic addition to our Cisco IPT platform. We find it flexible, robust and extremely easy to manage," John Petersen, CIO commented. He has also been impressed with the increased level of customer service that using Arc has provided, "Our response times are lower and more calls get to the right person, first time – our operators love the system!"



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