High Performance Computing (HPC) Leader Speeds Ahead with Transformed Communications Capabilities

Platform Computing unifies data and voice infrastructure with Cisco Unified Communications (UC) solution; Enjoys reduced communications costs, enhanced collaboration and increased security.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PLATFORM COMPUTING
▪ Industry: Computing Solutions & Software
BUSINESS CHALLENGES
▪ To reduce communication costs
▪ To have a better web collaboration tool
▪ To build secure network to protect business-critical intellectual property against unauthorized intrusion or theft
NETWORK SOLUTIONS
▪ Cisco Unified Communications
▪ Cisco Catalyst Switches
▪ Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance
BUSINESS VALUE
▪ Reduced communication costs
▪ Increased efficiency and enhanced collaboration with employees globally
▪ Improved customer responsiveness
▪ Consistent implementation of communication services

COMPANY DESCRIPTION

Established in 1992, Canadian-based Platform Computing (Platform) is a leading provider of High Performance Computing (HPC) management solutions, offering enterprise HPC cluster, cloud and grid computing services and software. With 530 employees in 10 offices across North America, Asia Pacific and Europe, Platform Computing is privately-held and has garnered 16 consecutive years of profitability.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Differentiating itself with the industry's largest critical mass of HPC expertise dedicated to research and development (R&D), it is not surprising that the world's top financial institutions and high-technology companies look to Platform's solutions as their cornerstone technologies. Indeed, Platform demonstrates its commitment to R&D with a majority of its employees, numbering more than 200 in Asia Pacific, involved in research and development.

"As a largely engineering-based company, the ability to collaborate effectively across our globally distributed R&D teams and the protection of our intellectual property are key business goals. These are extremely vital as we incorporate inputs from our customers and partners into our development process to better define our products and ensure a closer fit to our customers' needs," said Mr Laurence Liew, Director, Cloud Innovation Centre and Open Source Grid Development Centre, Platform Computing Singapore Pte Ltd.

The need to collaborate with its distributed development teams across the globe, including its Asian development teams in Singapore, Tokyo, and Beijing and Xi'an in China, soon took its toll on Platform's communication costs. Using analog phones, contacting team members

across the globe was a hassle, as a long string of country and area codes was required for every overseas phone call made. In addition, with no standard web collaboration tool, setting up and logging into calls for meetings was tedious as most employees were unfamiliar with the myriad web tools used across its global offices.

When Platform Singapore outgrew its service office and moved to its new office in 2008, the management decided to deploy the Cisco UC solution.

NETWORK SOLUTION

"Cisco's comprehensive suite of UC solution is able to meet our needs at a reasonable price point. As a long-time user of Cisco switching and wireless solutions, our IT team is already familiar with Cisco networking solutions. We are also confident that Cisco will deliver the reliability, scalability and long-term support we are looking for. All these factors made it a logical decision to unify our data and voice infrastructures with the Cisco UC solution," said Liew.

Cisco UC solution combines voice, video, data and mobile applications on fixed and mobile networks. Using Cisco IP Phones, Platform's employees enjoy consistent communications services, enabling them to stay connected wherever they are – be it in the office, away from their desks or remotely.

Platform's UC solution comprises of Cisco® Call Manager Express, Cisco® Communications Manager Express, Cisco® Unity Express with voice mail licenses, Cisco® IP Conference Station, Cisco® Catalyst® 3560 and 2960 Series switches, Cisco® ASA 5510 Adaptive Security Appliance and the Cisco® Unified IP Phone 7945G.

The key components of the Cisco UC solution are the intelligent call processing functions of the Cisco Unified CallManager Express and Cisco Communications Manager Express. Delivering integrated IP telephony, voice mail, speed dials and automated attendant facility, the new system ensures that all customer calls are handled and managed swiftly.

Conducting meetings across offices and with customers is now hassle-free with the Cisco IP Conference Station. Platform's employees enjoy full-featured, hands-free conferencing with superior voice quality, while simplified wiring and easy manageability reduce administrative costs.

To protect Platform's vast knowledge base, the Cisco UC solution is augmented with the Cisco ASA 5510 Adaptive Security Appliance which delivers integrated voice and data security services for unified communications.

The task of delivering communication services across the organization is handled by the Cisco Catalyst 2960 and 3560 switches. These fixed-configuration switches ease the deployment of secure converged applications with uplinks that are easily upgradeable from 1 Gigabit Ethernet to 10 Gigabit Ethernet. With the Catalyst switches supporting Power over Ethernet (PoE) configurations with up to 15.4W of PoE on all 48 ports, total cost of ownership is also reduced with no need for additional cabling to each PoE-enabled device.

BUSINESS VALUE

Reduced communication costs is the key benefit Platform enjoys with the new system. "With Cisco IP Telephony, we have cut our monthly IDD costs significantly by S$500. This is impressive, considering the current employee strength of just 25 in the Singapore office," commended Liew.

Cisco UC also transformed the way Platform's employees work and collaborate with their global colleagues. One feature highlighted is the convenience of dialing a 4-digit extension to reach a co-worker, even if he is based in the Beijing office. "Unlike the "old days" when we had to login to the corporate intranet to hunt for a colleague's extension, with directory integration we can now simply search for it on our Cisco IP Phone. This has greatly simplified the way we work," explained Liew.

Thanks to the Cisco Unified IP Phone 7945G, Platform is seeing enhanced customer responsiveness and team collaboration, as incoming messages and missed calls are easily traceable using the IP Phone's user-friendly, backlit colour display. Calls can be returned easily via the direct dial-back capability. In the event when employees are on the road, calls or voice messages from their extensions can be redirected to the Cisco IP Communicator in their laptops, thus enabling them to communicate as if they are at the office.

"Our confidence in Cisco and its industry-leading solutions is best evidenced by our choice of a full suite of Cisco solutions – from wireless, networking to telephony. It is a safe technology bet to invest in Cisco and we anticipate more innovative technologies from Cisco in the coming years."

Mr Laurence Liew, Director, Cloud Innovation Centre and Open Source Grid Development Centre, Platform Computing Singapore Pte Ltd

"The Cisco UC solution gives us the ability to stay connected at all times – making it a critical enabler in our Disaster Recovery plan. In the event when a crisis hits, such as the global H1N1 flu pandemic, we have the flexibility to have up to 50 percent of our employees working remotely – without disrupting normal business

operations. This assures Platform of sustained business continuity and sharpens our competitive advantage," explained Liew.

By standardizing web collaboration on Cisco MeetingPlace, collaboration amongst employees are now more effective, with less time spent in setting up meetings.

The Platform management is also delighted with the enhanced security safeguards they have gained with Cisco. Liew said, "Being a global company, our offices and information assets are all linked. Cisco security capabilities such as the Cisco Virtual Private Network (VPN), robust firewalls and full-featured IP security features protect our network and business-critical intellectual property against unauthorized intrusion or theft."

Addressing the returns on investment, Liew said, "In addition to the direct IDD cost savings we have enjoyed, the ease in managing an integrated data and voice infrastructure also translates to cost savings. We know that the unified communications infrastructure in our new office has reaped us time and cost savings, otherwise spent managing disparate network and PBX systems."

NEXT STEPS

Looking ahead, establishing an IP-based infrastructure has readied Platform to employ future rich-media such as video in their customer communications. "We have been exploring the use of live videos in conducting customer seminars, training and workshops. Knowing that our infrastructure is ready to support such impending business requirements give us confidence and protect our investment for the future," said Liew.

Counting Cisco as its strategic technology partner, Liew concluded, "Our confidence in Cisco and its industry-leading solutions is best evidenced by our choice of a full suite of Cisco solutions – from wireless, networking to telephony. It is a safe technology bet to invest in Cisco and we anticipate more innovative technologies from Cisco in the coming years."