



# Virtual experts keep customers close

Offering new ways of working, knowledge-ready contact center technology has equipped Ferguson for renewed growth.

“We’re reaching many more customer types, and they all require different subject matter experts. Increasingly, we can connect customers to the associate with the exact knowledge they need.”

Todd Young, Senior Director, Ferguson Enterprises

Ferguson’s customers, like all savvy consumers, have more options than ever before. Traditional customer care was due for an update. The Cisco® customer care solution helps expand local stores’ horizons.

## Challenges

- Improve customer service levels to stay competitive.
- Ensure consistent customer experience regardless of location, time, or device.
- Enable future growth with efficiency.

One-to-one customer relationships helped make Ferguson the largest North American plumbing wholesaler. However, scaling customer care in line with customer volumes became a challenge.

Customers would phone their local store. Their main contact person could be busy with a customer or at the counter. So, they’d leave a message and wait for a call back. That was cause for concern. Today people have information at their fingertips and expect immediate service. Raising standards everywhere was imperative.

“We have 1100 locations and 250 retail showrooms, says senior director, Todd Young. “We wanted to create a consistent customer experience across the business.”

With 22,000 employees—known as associates—Ferguson could draw on a vast pool of expertise. Making that available to all customers, without losing the personal touch, was the key to improving service—and unlocking future growth.

## Case Study | Ferguson Enterprises

Size: 22,000 associates

Location: Headquartered in Virginia

Industry: Wholesale and retail sales



## Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise gives instant access to virtual experts for better outcomes and happier customers.

### Solutions

- Contact center solution supports business process change.
- Cisco network infrastructure and call management provide unifying foundation.

### Getting the technology right

Cisco Unified Communications Manager was ideal. Ferguson also adopted Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise—not as a conventional contact center but a means of changing business processes.

“Once we were fully engaged with Cisco, technology was no longer a stumbling block,” says Joshua Smith, IT analyst. “The Cisco solution was flexible, scalable, and its features meshed with our strategy.”

### Creating a virtual knowledge pool

Ferguson started building a framework of Inside Sales centers, each serving one region. The idea was to answer all calls, instead of having them diverted to individual voicemails. It’s a virtual setup, so associates don’t have to relocate or commute long distances.

Meanwhile, Ferguson maximizes local knowledge and expertise by distributing calls among associates in the district that the customer called.

### Keeping it personal

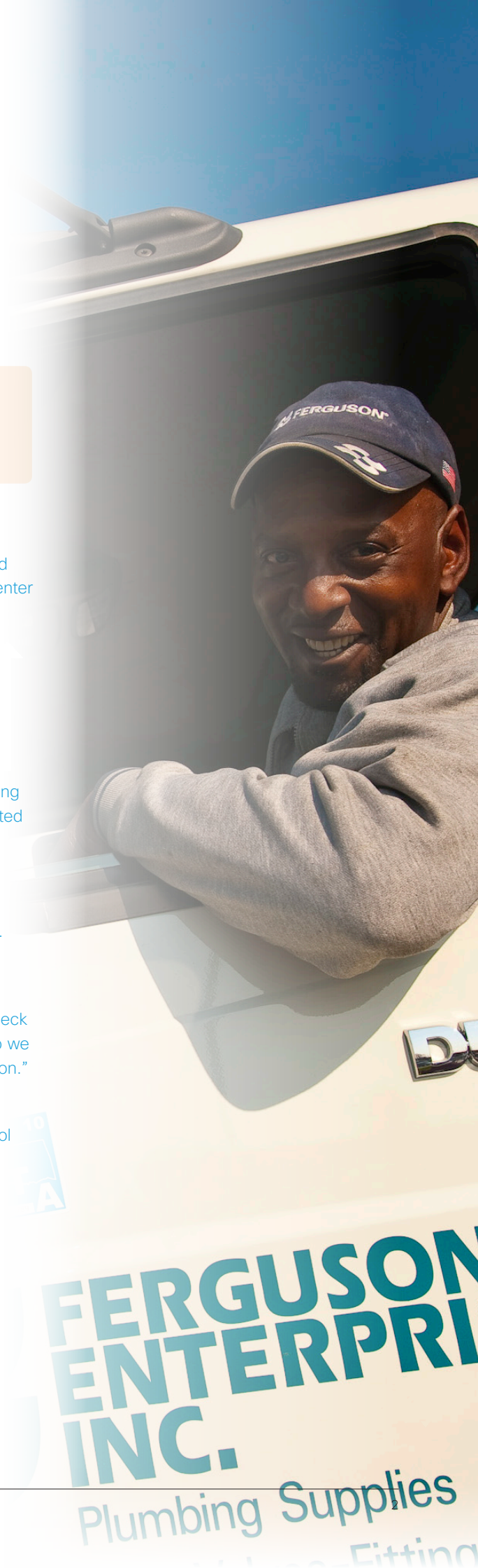
Inside Sales associates use presence on Cisco Jabber® technology to check the availability of colleagues. Smith says: “We blend the tools together, so we can efficiently move traffic and have the customer speak to the right person.”

The Cisco Finesse® solution is yielding fresh insight into how associates’ days are organized. The customizable desktop is becoming a powerful tool for workforce management and capacity planning.

Every call is answered in the customer’s locality or region by a customer concierge. That’s a person, not an automated service. The concierge assesses customers’ needs and decides how to direct their calls.



Associates from 19 sales centers work on 1 platform



## Results

- Faster service for trade and retail customers.
- Better, more consistent experience.
- Company well placed for growth.

## On track for future improvements

Service is faster and higher quality. Customers appreciate being able to talk to someone when their sales associate is busy. The backlog of voicemails has evaporated.

True to its goals, Ferguson can keep associates close to the customer, while using their skills through a growing virtual organization. Calls can be shared across regional centers. "That flexibility is paramount for us," says Young.

Ferguson has successfully expanded its traditional business model, without shedding its trademark personal touch. Previously, the company's ability to capture market share in a given region may have been limited by the expertise of the associates there. Not any more.

"We're reaching many more customer types, all requiring different subject matter experts," Young concludes. "Increasingly, we can connect customers to the associate with the exact knowledge they need."

## Products & Services

### Collaboration

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Jabber solution
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise
- Cisco Finesse solution
- Cisco Unified Intelligence Center
- Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal

## For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solutions in this case study, visit [www.cisco.com/go/collaboration](http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration)

For details of Ferguson Enterprises, visit [www.ferguson.com](http://www.ferguson.com)



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