GOING PLACES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LGA and Cisco Systems share a long and fruitful relationship that has seen LGA grow from a tiny Singapore start-up into a full-fledged Internet Service Provider (ISP) with offices in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Malaysia. LGA is currently a major Cisco partner in the Voice-over-IP (VoIP) space, selling Cisco's solutions to small and medium sized businesses (SMBs). LGA believes that Cisco has the best VoIP products and is looking forward to expanding its relationship with Cisco in the future.

CISCO SYSTEMS

THIS IS THE POWER OF THE NETWORK. now.

BACKGROUND

LGA is a one-stop, total ISP based in Singapore. From a small start-up in 1995, the company has grown to more than 40 employees. LGA offers services such as broadband connectivity, Virtual Private Networks (VPN), web hosting, managed networks and utility computing. LGA is also a Cisco Premier Certified Partner specializing in IP Telephony.

Today, close to 2,000 Singapore-based enterprises use LGA to conduct business. Its customers include Keppel FELS, John Hancock International, Hong Leong Asia, Murata Manufacturing, the Singapore Technologies Group, Parkway Shenton, the Meiban Group, Trend Singapore, Discovery Asia and the Singapore Commodity Exchange.

LGA BELIEVES THAT A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH CISCO AND ITS CONVERGED SOLUTIONS WILL ENABLE IT TO DELIVER CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS TO ITS CUSTOMERS.

THE ISP CHALLENGE

Being an ISP today is not easy according to LGA founder and CEO, Daniel Ang. "There is price erosion because of the increased competition and a weak market. In addition, being an ISP now means going up against deep-pocketed telcos who are going after any niche they consider profitable."

For a relatively small and young company like LGA to survive in this dog-eat-dog world, it is on the constant lookout for new technologies. It also has to be nimble so as to seize on emerging opportunities. Good partners can help lower the overall risk.

In order to stay ahead of the competition, LGA develops value-added solutions that it can offer its customers. These days, that value-added solution is in the IP-telephony space.

LGA is a big believer in Voice-over IP. Said Mr Ang, "We believe that voice is the next big thing. At LGA, we believe that voice completes the picture for us. And we are excited about Cisco Internet Telephony products and solutions."

LGA now offers Cisco IP phones and Cisco's Internet Telephony Systems to its corporate customers. Said Mr Ang, "The convergence of data and voice applications in a single Cisco-based IP voice and data network brings benefits such as higher productivity, ease of maintenance, operating cost reduction and better network scalability."

LGA is not just jumping on the VoIP bandwagon. They have been looking at it for some time but only now believe that it is ready for prime time.

Said Mr Ang, "We tried out VoIP when it first surfaced on the Internet in 1997. We were appalled by the quality. It was certainly not ready for prime time. Even during the dot-com years, we were not convinced that it was ready.

"This time, however, it is different. Now the market is ready. Voice is poised for exponential growth. The number of voice applications will be exploding. It is not just voice minute revenues but voice applications."

Even so, LGA approached VoIP very carefully. They conducted a nine-month trial to test user acceptance. This was also a way for them to get used to the technology and to understand the kind of support it could offer to its customers.

WHY CISCO?

For Mr Ang, going with Cisco to deliver VoIP was an obvious and sensible decision. "There are not many good IP solutions in the market. We would rather work with Cisco than some unknown company. We prefer to sell a known brand than an unknown one. If they close shop, we will be left with no support and no upgrades. There is no danger of this with Cisco."

Cisco and LGA have had a long and very fruitful relationship. When LGA first started in 1995, all it had were two 19.2Kbps modems, a server and a Cisco router.

In 1999, LGA built its first data centre in a modest 1,000 sq ft facility. It was a complete Cisco shop and LGA built it without any external funding. In 2000,

Cisco Capital saw the potential of LGA and helped the company build its second data centre.

Since then, LGA has branched into many new areas of business. But any time a network is involved, LGA has depended on Cisco. Said Mr Ang, "We try to rollout a new service every quarter and that adds a lot to stress the relationship. Fortunately, the Cisco-LGA partnership has stood the test of time."

He said that there is constant dialogue between the two companies. "The Cisco guys provide us training and updates, both in terms of technologies and markets. Our R&D teams work very closely to thresh out technical issues."

CUNO FILTRATION, AN LGA CUSTOMER, PRAISES LGA-CISCO PARTNERSHIP FOR ITS COMBINATION OF EXCELLENT TECHNOLOGY AND GOOD INTEGRATION.

THE RESULTS

LGA has implemented VoIP solutions for a number of companies in Singapore. One of them is Cuno Filtration, a US-based company with a regional office in Singapore. LGA helped them set up a communications channel between the Singapore regional office and the subsidiary in Shanghai.

The solution was a Cisco-based Virtual Private Network (VPN) and IP voice network using Cisco CallManager Express routers. This resulted in a single IP network converging the data and voice applications.

Said Mr Dennis Moh, the MIS Manager at Cuno Filtration, "This enabled us to have frequent communication with our subsidiary via conference calls, telephone discussions and interviews without worrying about high telecommunication costs."

Mr Moh said the return on investment would be in the region of 12 months.

On the Cisco-LGA partnership, he said, "The Cisco-LGA partnership resulted in a combination of excellent technology and good integration."

Another of LGA's customers is the Singapore-based law firm of Yeo, Leong and Peh LLC. It was looking for an integrated IP solution to converge data and voice applications for themselves and their legal partners across China. They chose the Cisco PIX Firewall and IP VPN solutions to address both the IP security and wide area network (WAN) issues.

Said Mr Ang, "Today, they are able to talk to their Chinese partners with Cisco IP phones and share customised legal applications on their private IP network. This results in higher productivity and better communication with their overseas partners."

THE FUTURE

LGA is already planning for the future. It is evaluating Cisco's IP Centrex solution, a carrier-grade PABX solution. This is a business phone service in which all the functionality lies in a Class 5 switch on the carrier's network. It offers business-class services such as call transfer, conferencing and forwarding.

Because voice and data share the same circuit, fewer dedicated voice circuits are needed, so end users may see a reduction in overall telecommunications costs. In addition, an IP Centrex service can simplify network configuration.

Ang has no problems putting his faith in Cisco. He said, "The Cisco team is tremendous. They know what they are doing and their products are technically superior. Cisco is clearly a leader in the network market. Our working relationship with everyone, from the sales and marketing to the technical consultants, has been very, very strong."

He noted that to Cisco, size was never an issue. "They wanted a competent partner in this region and LGA was never too small for them."

He added, "LGA's R&D, operational and sales teams have benefited from the training, close collaboration and knowledge sharing. We conduct thorough testing on Cisco equipment in house and together with Cisco.

"This research and testing is essential because we want our customers to have the highest quality of experience possible using our network and services. The more we iron out the problems before we launch products and service, the better for them and for us."

"Cisco has been a great help in the market place by bringing customers to LGA. Their commitment to partner success is well known. With a strong partner like Cisco, we cannot help but be committed to our customers' success too."

THE LGA TEAM, FROM OPERATIONS TO SALES TO R&D, HAVE BENEFITED FROM CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH CISCO.

As LGA grows and expands, Cisco will continue to be the partner of choice. "We are going places. LGA offices in the UK, Hong Kong and Malaysia have now been set up. As a global player, Cisco is represented in these places and we will continue to stretch our relationship as we move together into new grounds. Our partnership in the past had been fruitful and going ahead is certainly going to get better."

CISCO SYSTEMS

®