CISCO ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS:
A NIRVANA OVER IP

For a multichannel contact center that would be scalable too, IP was the technology of choice

What do you expect when a venture capitalist decides to get into the business himself in an area that has brought him the maximum success? At the least, a business plan that would be extremely sound, realistic and most importantly, different.

So, when Raj Kondur-formerly a partner with ChrysCapital-decided to form Nirvana Business Solutions (NBS), no one was expecting that it would be just another company in the crowd. It was expected that it would invest in something that according to many, is yet to be proven-an IP-based contact center.

However, as one would expect from a seasoned VC, the decision to invest in the IP technology was directly derived from the business plan. The company had two distinct differentiators in its business plan. One, unlike many other BPO companies, which started as e-mail support centers or back-office processing centers, Nirvana wanted to provide the entire portfolio of services-namely inbound/outbound voice, transaction processing, and even high end analytics-right from day one. Two, the company wanted to build a learning organization that would continuously move up the value chain.

Both these point to why the company chose IP. For multichannel, blended contact centers, IP's superiority is well known. And also, by investing on a future-proof technology, the company was ensuring that valuable executive time, in future, was not spent on petty technical patching issues. The plan is to scale up in phases from 250 seats now. Nirvana's also looking at growing from an inbound call center initially to handling blended call traffic in future.

"We can integrate with our clients' environments today, and in future, as they grow," MS Rangaraj, CTO, Nirvana, says. "Our goal was to build a truly scalable, distributed architecture," he adds, emphasizing that even on the cost side, the TCO would work out to be lower for IP than for TDM, for a company that would grow faster. The scalability is not in steps, it is smooth.

NBS' key business objective is to address the burgeoning international call center market from the Bangalore facility. The plan is to scale up in phases from 250 seats now. It's looking at growing from the initial functionality of an in-bound call center to handling blended call traffic in future. The plan is to have a geographically separate mirror site, which would double up as the disaster recovery (DR) center. The company uses MCI and Singtel as international carriers, and Bharti, VSNL and BSNL as domestic backhaul as well as last-mile carriers.

Technical Requirements

NBS placed extremely high priority on system availability and redundancy. For example, a key requirement was to demonstrate 100 percent redundancy, load sharing, and QoS features, with the possibility that the redundant part could be moved to a separate location at a future time. Network fault management, asset management with proactive 24x7 support, and maintenance were to be demonstrated. Also, the system is that it allows the client to log in remotely to monitor a live agent session (real time) in a manner transparent to the call center operations. NBS requirements clearly demanded that physical and logical levels of isolation between agents were working on simultaneous campaigns.

The Architecture

Bangalore-based Network Solution helped deploy the complete solution, based on Cisco IPCC. ICM software (as part of the Cisco IPCC framework) profiles each customer using data such as dialed number and calling line ID, caller-entered digits, data submitted on a Web form, and information obtained from a customer-profile database. At the same time, the system knows which resources are available to meet the customer's needs based on real-time conditions continuously gathered from contact center platforms and agent desktops.

Role of NI

Network Solutions (Netsol) was involved with the project from the point when design had been signed off by Cisco and Nirvana Tech teams. The Netsol team, along with the Nirvana technical team, came up with a detailed integration and deployment plan for the complete solution. Installation and configuration of voice equipment (VoIP gateways, WAN routers, interfacing voice cards, trunk ports), and enabling of transcoding, QoS features and bandwidth optimizing features on gateways were the next set of activities. Installation of LAN infrastructure, DSP resources, configuration of VLAN switches and configuration of QoS parameters on all core and access switches came next.

Netsol was further involved in setting up of Cisco Call Manager, Unity Voice Messaging Server, and Call Manager cluster; in configuring the Dial Plan Manager, user groups, route groups, and ensuring end-to-end connectivity of the complete IPCC solution. Installation of the IPCC-related software applications and agent/supervisor CTI desktop-related software application is an extensive activity and demands significant understanding of specific customer requirements besides platform training. End-to-end testing and user-acceptance-plan activities were completed in record time, ensuring that NBS went live on operations as per plans.