

Microsoft Office System Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions

Website: www.ennistraffic.com

Customer Size: 1,100 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Manufacturing

Partner: Catapult Systems

Customer Profile

Based in Dallas, Texas, Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions (formerly Ennis Paint) operates internationally, offering cost-effective, engineered solutions for traffic safety.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2
 - Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 R2
 - Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007

For more information about other Microsoft customer successes, please visit: www.microsoft.com/casestudies

Manufacturer Cuts Communications Expenses by 41 Percent with Unified Communications

“Customer service has always been at the heart of what we do. Unified Communications just means that we can make customer service even better.”

Chris Moran, Global IT Director, Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions

With the rapid growth of Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions has come a need for better communication and collaboration among increasingly dispersed facilities with incompatible phone systems. To meet that need, Ennis adopted a Microsoft Unified Communications solution. In the first year, communications expenses declined by 41 percent through lower phone bills, reduced travel, and more profitable decision making. Even better, customer service is faster and more effective.

Business Needs

Everyone should have such problems.

Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions has grown 1,600 percent over the past five years. It's broadened its product lines to include every major surfacing solution for traffic safety—paint, thermoplastics, antiskid materials, retroreflective materials, even raised pavement markers that stand up to snowplows. It's grown, too, from a U.S. concern to one that operates increasingly around the world.

But with all that growth came growing pains. One centered on the company's communications. With its growth driven mainly by acquisition, Ennis had also acquired incompatible, mostly analog,

phone systems. As the company grew, executives found themselves making more long-distance calls—with the phone bill growing each month. Video and web conferencing would reduce some of the travel expense associated with a dispersed workforce, but the phone systems didn't provide it, leading Ennis to subscribe to an expensive third-party conferencing service. IT support for the dispersed and varied phone systems was becoming more expensive, as well.

Cost wasn't the only concern. Employees in various plants or departments needed to communicate and collaborate with each other. The phone systems provided no way to route calls to available colleagues at other plants, nor did employees have any

effective way to know if their colleagues were available.

Most worrisome was the effect of the communications system on customer relations. When customers called to check on prices, deliveries, or other matters, the employees who responded couldn't transfer callers to an appropriate person or department in another facility. Employees had to provide callers with another phone number and advise them to hang up and try again.

Solution

To address these issues, Ennis considered a solution from Cisco. The solution had a high up-front cost and seemed to be expensive to maintain, as well. Instead, Ennis chose a Microsoft Unified Communications solution, implementing Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2, Office Live Meeting 2007, and Office Communicator 2007 R2.

To handle both the design and deployment of the solution, Ennis turned to Catapult, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. "We were impressed with their commitment to our success," says Chris Moran, Global IT Director for Ennis. "They have a 'make it right with the customer' attitude."

Phone calls that were formerly routed directly through the public service telephone network are now routed through servers running Office Communications Server in the data center. A call between the Dallas and Atlanta offices, for example, is carried completely by the company's network. A call from Dallas to a customer in Atlanta is handled over the company's network as far as the Atlanta office, and then transferred to the local public network to reach the customer.

Ennis is also using Office Communications Server for presence and instant messaging. Employees can check the presence status of a colleague at any facility from their desks or, remotely, from their laptops and mobile phones. They can then initiate an instant message (IM), phone call, or other communication.

The Office Live Meeting conferencing capabilities replace the third-party service that Ennis formerly used. The new functionality includes screen sharing, which minimizes the need to send documentation to attendees, helping to ensure that everyone is collaborating on the same document.

Benefits

With its unified communications solution, Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions has reduced expenses, enhanced collaboration, and improved customer service.

Cuts Expenses by 41 Percent

Ennis has cut communications expenses by 41 percent, thanks to its use of Unified Communications. The bulk of that savings comes from reductions in cell phone and long-distance charges, and from the termination of third-party conferencing services. Another major share is saved through the use of Office Live Meeting in place of much of the business travel that executives formerly undertook. "Now that we have unified communications, our chief executives travel only when they can't avoid it," says Kelly Garcia, Global Applications Director at Ennis.

New and better decision making results in major savings, too. For example, the company's business is seasonal. The presence capabilities in the new solution give managers a clear view of who's on the

phone and when, so they can make better decisions on what roles to allocate their employees to for the best customer experience during the course of each season.

Boosts Collaboration

Ennis also is increasing collaboration among employees. Office Live Meeting makes it possible for Ennis to hold meetings in a timely way. It might take the company's chief executives months to schedule an on-site meeting with a new plant manager; with Office Live Meeting, they can "meet" much sooner, freed from the constraints of travel schedules.

Employees use presence and IM to contact colleagues less obtrusively than with phone calls. They send IMs to colleagues across time zones at hours when they wouldn't contemplate making phone calls. They also coordinate between departments more quickly and efficiently. For example, Ennis estimates that by using IM, its sales and manufacturing departments implement changes to customer orders twice as quickly as before.

Enhances Customer Service

Perhaps the greatest benefit is the impact on customer service. Customers now call a central Ennis phone number to be transferred to whomever can help them, anywhere in the world. Calls are answered more quickly thanks to features such as call groups, single number reach, and simultaneous ring.

"Customer service has always been at the heart of what we do," says Moran. "Unified Communications just means that we can make customer service even better."