

Youth Center Enables Teachers and Staff to Communicate from Every Workspace

The Colin Powell Youth Leadership Center shares a Cisco Unified Communications system with Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation, and several other non-profit organizations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>COLIN POWELL YOUTH LEADERSHIP CENTER, URBAN VENTURES LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION, AND CRISTO REY JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit; Education • Minneapolis, Minnesota • Urban Ventures 43 employees, Cristo Rey 21 employees
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate varied communications needs of multiple organizations • Support mobile faculty and staff • Help students succeed at school and work
<p>NETWORK SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed a shared Cisco Unified Communications solution • Enabled each organization to customize call handling
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled employees to communicate everywhere, with everyone, from every workspace • Allocated costs of unified communications solution to multiple organizations • Exposed students to advanced workplace collaboration technology

Business Challenge

The Colin Powell Youth Leadership Center, named for the former United States Secretary of State, fulfills a long-time vision for the Urban Ventures Leadership Center, a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Urban Ventures' goal is help the city's economically disadvantaged youth graduate from high school and become productive members of the community. The urgent need — 50 percent of the city's youth fail to graduate — has inspired a group effort from local educational, community, and faith-based organizations.

Urban Ventures was planning to build a youth leadership center for its after-school programs. Coincidentally, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School was seeking to build a school for economically disadvantaged youth, one of many such high schools throughout the United States. Urban Ventures and Cristo Rey agreed to combine resources to build a state-of-the-art facility that would house the high school, a recreational facility, and multiple nonprofit youth organizations.

The new 160,000-square-foot Colin Powell Leadership Center, managed by Urban Ventures, opened in 2007. Urban Ventures provides academic, arts, and sports programs for poverty-level youth beginning at age 5. The inaugural class at the high school consists of 100 freshmen, who work five full weekdays each month at local businesses to earn 75 percent of the cost of their education. To allow this, the school has an extended school day and school year and schedules classes around the students' work schedules. On most week days there is an average of 350 youth in the building.

"When we built the Colin Powell Youth Leadership Center, we wanted to include an advanced unified communications system that could be tailored for the needs of multiple organizations and would expose the students to the technology that their future employers use," says Matt von Ende, information systems manager for the Colin Powell Leadership Center. von Ende engaged rClient, LLC, a strategic technology consulting firm, for ideas on how to take full advantage of the network.

“We wanted the brains of voice and data services to be in the network, not in individual phones or PCs that can fail or get lost,” says James Farstad, president of rClient. “When the network is the platform, it needs to be robust, flexible, solid, and easy to manage, which is why we selected Cisco.” With a plan in place, von Ende engaged Parallel Technologies, Inc., a Cisco® Premier Certified partner, to develop the selection criteria for the unified communications system:

- Support for expected growth. Cristo Rey High School will be adding 125 students and eight teachers every year for the next three years.
- Flexibility to support different user groups occupying the center. The communications system needs to support two large and several small organizations, each with three to 75 employees. The organizations have different preferences for call handling — for example, some want to send all calls to a single voicemail box, while others prefer that callers reach a person.
- Support for mobility. Teachers, staff, and program employees move around the facility and regularly visit corporate sponsors. They need to be able to communicate from any workspace: classroom, office, corporate sponsor’s office, or home.
- Low total cost of ownership. Every dollar saved on voice system administration can be invested in youth services.

Network Solution

After evaluating leading communications systems, Urban Ventures selected the Cisco Unified Communications solution. “Cisco Unified Communications met the criteria, and would give the high school students experience using the same Cisco platform used by major local employers,” says Mark Torguson, director of operations, Parallel Technologies.

Parallel Technologies installed Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unity Unified Messaging systems in the youth center. Two other sites within a few blocks — Urban Ventures headquarters and the Urban Youth Hub — receive voice and voicemail services over the network, which is built on Cisco switches and routers. Every classroom and office has a Cisco Unified IP Phone, which teachers can use to make and receive calls from staff and parents. They can also press a button on the phone to immediately summon a security guard. The Colin Powell Youth Leadership Center avoided the costs of a separate paging system by using Berbee InformaCast software, which sends pages through the built-in speakers of Cisco Unified IP Phones in classrooms and offices.

Each organization has its choice of how to handle calls. One organization sends all calls directly to a voicemail box, for example, while the director of another organization has specified that his calls should successively ring the receptionist, a personal assistant, and then his own phone before going to voicemail. The sports program set up a special phone number that plays a Cisco Unity voicemail announcement providing the time and location of sports team practices and games. “We have limitless flexibility for how to handle inbound calls to meet each organization’s requirements,” says von Ende.

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— Matt von Ende, Information Systems Manager, Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation

Business Results

Cisco Unified Communications makes it easier for teachers, staff, parents, and students to communicate with everyone, everywhere, from any workspace. Faculty members, who teach in different classrooms throughout the day, can log on to the Cisco Unified IP Phone in their classroom at the beginning of the period to personalize it with their own phone number and preferences. “This extension mobility feature makes teachers much more accessible to parents and staff, who can dial the same number to reach them in any classroom,” says von Ende. Teachers also like being able to check their voicemail from any phone if they are visiting a corporate sponsor or working from home.

The president of the high school, who frequently attends multiple meetings a day, in different locations, remains accessible by using the Cisco Unified Personal Communicator unified client on a laptop that connects over the youth center’s wireless network. Using the laptop and his headset, he can transform any location in the center into his workspace.

Students are gaining experience with business-class voicemail. They call the Cisco Unity Unified Messaging system whenever they will be absent from school or their corporate internship. The first prompt asks students whether they would like to hear instructions in English or Spanish, and the next asks if they are reporting an absence from school or their internship. “Having separate voicemail boxes relieves faculty and staff from trying to figure out which type of absence a student is reporting,” says von Ende. “And students gain a practical skill that they will need when they join the workforce.”

Cisco Unified Communications also helps parents stay in closer touch with the school, an important factor in students’ academic success. “We set up hunt groups so that if a parent is unable to reach a particular person, the call is automatically routed to someone else with a similar job function,” says von Ende. “Having a human answer the phone is reassuring to parents whose children are attending a brand-new school.” And when the school needs to inform parents about special events, such as a change in schedule, an administrator can use Cisco Unity to send a broadcast message to all homes.

The IT department benefits from the Cisco Unified Communications solution, as well, because time saved on tasks such as moves, adds, and changes frees up time for strategic IT projects. von Ende

has hired three college students as interns. “The Web-based management interface is very easy to use,” he says. “The interns quickly learned how to take care of day-to-day tasks such as resetting passwords, programming new IP phones, and creating new user accounts. They are gaining valuable work experience — and we are saving money.”

Next Steps

Urban Ventures and Parallel Technologies are planning new ways to support the youth center’s mobile employees, so that everyone, everywhere, can communicate on every device. Security and facilities personnel, who rarely work at their desks, will be given Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones. School personnel who visit corporate sponsors will use Cisco Unified Personal Communicator on laptops. In both cases, callers will be able to reach the employees anywhere they may be by calling their office number.

PRODUCT LIST
Routing and Switching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco 2851 Routers • Cisco Catalyst 2960, 3560, and 3750 Switches
Security and VPN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance 5510 • Cisco Network Admissions Control (NAC)
Voice and Unified Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Unified Communications Manager • Cisco Unity Unified Messaging • Cisco Unified IP Phones 7911G and 7941G • Cisco Unified IP Conference Station 7936 • Cisco Unified Personal Communicator • Cisco Unified Survivable Remote Site Telephony • Cisco Emergency Responder

The high school also plans to take advantage of its Cisco network to enhance classroom safety. In the future, when teachers press a button on their Cisco Unified IP Phone to summon a security guard to the classroom, the Cisco Unified Communications solution will also send real-time video from the surveillance camera in the classroom. The video feed will provide security personnel with the situational awareness that they need to respond appropriately.

Finally, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School intends to capitalize on its advanced unified communications system to prepare students for careers in technology. “We are planning a course to give students experience with administering the network and Cisco Unified Communications Solutions,” says Torguson. “A

Networking 101 class will help students compete for jobs.”

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/uc>.



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