

IT vendor operates more effectively with new UC environment



The Challenge

When a global leader in colocation services and interconnection solutions needed to bring their unified communications (UC) environment up to date they engaged Zones for a consultation.

The company was utilizing Cisco MCS series servers and a version of Cisco Unified Communications Manager that had been designated as end of life across their three global divisions (North America, Europe, and Asia). Zones was asked to assess their existing environment and come up with a migration plan that fit the customer's timeline.

The Solution

Project planning

Zones reviewed the company's existing Cisco UC versions, firmware on phones, and IOS on voice gateways in order to determine the impact any upgrades would have on their environment and end users. This information was then analyzed by Zones to determine which devices (outside of the core UC applications) would need to be upgraded for compatibility.

Challenge

Replace outdated communications environment in three global locations.

Solution

- Cisco UCS C-Series servers
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
- Cisco IM and Presence
- Cisco Prime Collaboration Deployment
- VMware vSphere ESXi Hypervisor
- Zones Advanced Solutions Group project services

Results

- Implementation of best practices through policy-driven automation
- Significantly lower support costs
- Support for voicemail within Office 365 environment
- Support for video endpoints
- Increased IT agility and responsiveness to business trends

The Solution *cont.*

Based on information gathered during the discovery phase, the Zones project manager developed a plan that would minimize the impact on business during the project. The project would migrate the company's hardware from out-of-date MCS Servers to the latest Cisco UCS virtualized servers. The plan also included the upgrade of the company's version of Cisco Unified Communications Manager to the latest supported version.

Zones met onsite with the company's telecom team to review the plan and kick off the project. It was decided that migrations would be completed one region at a time in order to minimize the risk associated with a major upgrade simultaneously across all regions.

Migration and testing

Zones began the migration by upgrading all the dependent components (phones and voice gateways) in all of the company's regions. This required interruption in their services, so all work was performed after hours, or times designated by the company's regional project representative.

Experts from Zones were onsite to work together with the customer's IT department when Cisco's Prime Collaboration Deployment was used to migrate the company's existing Cisco UC applications to the latest version and to new Cisco UCS C Series servers. The new servers were staged at one of Zones' company-owned staging and distribution centers before being shipped to data center locations.

Once a region was successfully migrated, Zones and the company's regional IT representative worked through a test plan to verify all systems were working as expected.

Zones utilized this same process across all three regions, and continued to provide post installation support in the event an issue occurs at any of the regional locations.

In total, the Zones designed solution utilized 14 Cisco UCS C-Series servers. In addition, nearly all Cisco ISR routers/voice gateways had to be upgraded with new IOS to be compatible with the latest version of Cisco Unified Communications Manager – amounting to more than 100 voice gateway devices in total.

Zones Advanced Solutions Group engineers were on hand to perform all install, upgrade, and migration tasks including:

- > Project planning and oversight
- > Configuration of Cisco UCS servers
- > Cisco Unified Communications Manager installation and migration
- > Cisco Unified Contact Center Express upgrade
- > Cisco IM and presence installation, including Jabber configuration
- > Voice gateway upgrade
- > Testing and verification
- > Post installation support

The Results

Initially, the driving force for the project was the replacement of the end-of-life Cisco servers, which was completed without any issues or project delays. By adopting the latest version of Cisco Unified Communications Manager, the company's IT team is able to support video endpoints natively, reducing the support structure for teams responsible for two separate systems.

Additional cost and operational benefits for the company include:

- > Streamline operations by automating routine tasks and significantly lower support costs
- > Gain flexibility and efficiency to help make the IT team more agile and responsive to the business
- > Mitigate risk by implementing best practices through policy-driven automation
- > Leverage support for voicemail within the Office 365 environment

With the successful completion of the UC migration and upgrade, the company is working with Zones on their next project which is a video infrastructure migration.

