



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

CISCO IP COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTION GIVES ATLANTA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AUTONOMY AND CONTROL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

Atlanta Catholic Schools

INDUSTRY

Education

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Increase autonomy, improve operating efficiencies, and reduce costs
- Take advantage of technology, while lowering the total cost of network ownership
- Create a stable, reliable, fast, and mobile voice and data network

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco Powered Network voice and data solution delivered by service provider Cbeyond Communications and systems integrator Snap Technology, Inc.

BUSINESS VALUE

- Eliminated dependence on a salaried technician, reduced monthly network, telecommunications, and support costs
- Increased staff productivity and effective communications between teachers, students, and parents
- Delivered constant and reliable connectivity, instant communication, and enhanced learning

Six of Atlanta’s Catholic elementary schools adopted Cbeyond’s managed voice and data services over a Cisco powered IP network to increase operating efficiencies, reduce costs, and deliver constant connectivity, instant communication, and enhanced learning.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Established as a Diocese in 1956 and an Archdiocese in 1962, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta encompasses 21,445 square miles in 69 counties. The Office of Catholic Schools (OCS) in the Archdiocese of Atlanta oversees the operation of 18 elementary schools that serve more than 8100 students, and three high schools serving more than 2300 students. Promoting the educational ministry of the Catholic Church, the OCS provides guidance, leadership, and support to its schools.

In the late 1990s, realizing that technology was transforming education—just like other industries—the OCS in Atlanta deployed a wide-area network (WAN) to improve communications and maximize operating efficiencies throughout the schools. Nine of the diocesan elementary schools shared a Frame Relay connection on a traditional phone network. Each school paid a portion of the T1 and optical lines that went from downtown Atlanta to the Internet. Because Frame Relay is a highly technical product, the OCS had to hire a full-time employee just to manage the network alone.

There were considerable drawbacks to this network solution, primarily the result of an unreliable, unstable platform. And because the schools used the same network, they all experienced slow response times, loss of productivity, high monthly telephone and maintenance costs, and heightened security risks. To make matters worse, the schools had limited control over their own budgets and operations.

To help overcome these challenges and empower each school, the OCS turned to its trusted IT services partner, Snap Technology, Inc.

NETWORK SOLUTION

Having worked with the OCS in Atlanta since 1998, Snap Technology, Inc. understood the educational and technical needs of the Archdiocese and began looking into updating its network infrastructure. Recognizing that converging voice, data, and Internet communications into one integrated system would improve communications between teachers, students, and parents, Snap Technology, Inc. turned to Cbeyond, a Cisco® Powered Network voice and data service provider, to recommend a move to a managed IP Communications platform.

“As a Cbeyond Authorized Reseller, we presented the Cisco/Cbeyond IP voice and data network solution to the OCS’ Superintendent of Schools at the Archdiocese’s yearly business summit meeting,” says Daniel Shaffer, president of Snap Technology, Inc. “When we showed the school the potential for administrative network autonomy, the reduction in technical support overhead and the significant cost savings of the Cisco/Cbeyond IP solution, the superintendent embraced the solution.” In the spirit of empowering the schools, the principal at each school was left to make his or her own decision. Within weeks, six of the nine schools on the old Frame Relay service chose to implement the Cisco/Cbeyond IP network solution.

Using voice over IP (VoIP) and a 100-percent Cisco network, Cbeyond provided each of the six schools with an integrated package of high-quality local and long-distance telephony services; high-quality, symmetric T1 Internet access; and Web-based business productivity tools. Cisco’s Internet Access Device (IAD) merged voice communications from the schools’ phone systems and IP data traffic from their LAN, then passed all traffic in IP format to Cbeyond’s private, managed IP network.

“The flexibility, affordability, and simplicity make the Cisco/Cbeyond solution ideal for Atlanta’s Catholic schools,” says Shaffer. “The traditional T1 Internet connection broken into 24 static channels was not cost-effective for schools and small companies. Cisco IAD acts a traffic cop, directing voice and data. Bandwidth dynamically fluctuates according to the schools’ needs, always maximizing the connection. Having the fastest Internet connection possible with constant communication is critical when all the students are on the computer at the same time.”

Cisco’s common platform enabled the Archdiocese to bring all of the performance, efficiencies, and productivity-enhancing features and technology to every desktop and telephone across its schools. The Cisco wireless access points on laptop carts has given the staff the mobility to wheel the carts into the classroom, allowing each child to have a laptop at his/her desk—no cables needed. Additionally, the Cisco network allowed each school to replace the old chalkboards with digital smart boards, making each classroom a more engaging and interactive learning environment.

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BUSINESS VALUE

Since the Cisco/Cbeyond VoIP solution has been in place, the staff, students, and parents at the six Atlanta Catholic schools have realized tremendous benefits. By moving to a single network environment, each school has lowered its network management and maintenance costs. Each school saves \$500–1500 per month, depending on its Cbeyond package, and gains a much faster Internet connection. These savings allow the schools to redirect the extra funds to student-related programs.

The managed services voice and data network and managed IP Communications solution minimize the administrative effort required to maintain the technical solution, while maximizing productivity. “With Cbeyond’s ‘single point of contact’ for all networking issues, the school’s junior technologist is no longer required to spend hours on the phone troubleshooting a line or router problem without expertise,” said Shaffer. “This administrative overhead is simply no longer necessary.” Now, the schools make one phone call or use Cbeyond Online™, an easy intuitive Web-based account management tool that allows the schools to modify, monitor, and make instant changes to their voice and data services and account—on their own and at their convenience.

Additionally, with the Cisco/Cbeyond VoIP solution, the Atlanta Catholic schools gain the benefits of:

- **Improved productivity**—The schools' overall productivity has improved greatly because of the easy-to-use, feature-rich Cisco/Cbeyond IP Communications solution. From finance to fund-raising to supply replenishment, the schools now run mission-critical applications and programs across the network, while gaining full access to the unlimited resources of the Internet. By having their own internal Website, teachers have dependable access to student attendance records, behavior information, and grade tracking programs.
- **Reliability and availability**—The biggest advantage to the schools and to Snap Technology, Inc. is the unparalleled reliability of the Cisco equipment and the availability of Cbeyond's network. "As a small business owner myself, credibility is paramount to our success," says Shaffer. "If the network system does not run well, our reputation suffers. We have not had one maintenance call from the schools on the Cisco equipment since it was installed. In addition, the schools have received 100% network availability from Cbeyond."
- **Enhanced school safety**—Security is at the forefront of every decision made by the schools. The Cisco stable platform allows school administrators to proactively disseminate information to staff and parents during an emergency. Additionally, Cisco wireless infrastructure allows school administrators to communicate with teachers and staff anywhere on the school grounds, dramatically improving response times and outcomes during emergencies.

NEXT STEPS

As with any business, if the school's network goes down, production stops. Since the six Atlanta Catholic schools implemented the Cisco/Cbeyond VoIP solution, there have been no connection or circuit failures. "As the schools identify new projects and upgrades, the Cisco platform will always be a given—it's scalable to accommodate growth and change," says Shaffer. "A Cisco Systems® foundation is like the foundation of your house—once you have it, you don't think about it. It gives me great confidence and peace of mind knowing that we have provided the best possible solution to the Atlanta Catholic schools—the Cisco/Cbeyond IP Communications solution. It's also nice to know that I am working with a company like Cbeyond, that continually enhances its services with new business tools, bringing productivity solutions to my customers in new features and functions."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cisco Systems has helped small businesses around the world become more connected, streamlined, and operationally cost-effective. To find out how Cisco can help your organization, contact your local Cisco account representative.

For more information on small- and medium-size business-class managed solutions from Cisco Systems, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/ms4smb>.

Cbeyond Communications: <http://www.cbeyond.net>.

Snap Technology, Inc.: <http://www.snaptechit.com>.

This customer story is based on information provided by Snap Technology, Inc., an agent for the Archdiocese Schools of Atlanta, and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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