

Small Company; Big Impact: Enroute Networks and Cisco Call Manager Express Give Edge Solutions Room to Roam



Business Overview

Edge Solutions is an Atlanta (Alpharetta)-based business and IT solution consulting firm specializing in services ranging from server and storage virtualization and consolidation to ecommerce procurement tools and solutions. The company was founded on the principle that operational excellence would be a core value of the organization. As such, it helps clients reap maximum benefit from the IT investments they make, assessing their current environments, considering future needs and accurately defining business and IT challenges. Edge Solutions then matches clients with solutions and services from leading technology vendors such as HP, Oracle, and SAP, shepherding them through every step of the process to ensure the desired outcome.

Business Case

For Edge Solutions, harnessing big-company technology in a small company environment isn't an interim step on the way to becoming a large firm. Rather, it's part of an overall plan to stay lean and nimble. It is by strategic design that Edge Solutions has a small corporate footprint, as it allows the firm to provide a more personal and responsive level of service than what is often found with larger IT firms. To provide optimal service for a nationally located client and prospect base, Edge maintains a single physical office in Georgia and uses a distributed virtual office model.

With remote employees in the District of Columbia, Colorado, Alabama, New Mexico, Florida and Texas, Edge wanted a telephony solution that provided seamless inbound and outbound call service to employees wherever they might be.

"We knew when we started the business that we would have a dispersed workforce," says Edge VP of Marketing Kristen Beatty. "We wanted to enable our people in New Mexico and Florida to work from wherever they were located. We needed something to help accommodate that."

Strategic Plan

During the business planning phase before initiating operations, the principals of Edge Solutions knew they wanted to build a state-of-the-art infrastructure – from "servers and applications to the phone system," says Beatty – that would make the company strong and agile.

"On day one when the first customer called, we wanted to look like a big company and act like a small one," says Edge Solutions President Michael Haley. After implementing a Microsoft environment to run the organization, the company turned to its managed IT services provider for a VoIP recommendation.

"What we really wanted was a company that could install a phone switch for us that would allow us to manage the business from a

central location but with a distributed perspective," says Haley. "We were looking for something that would help us grow the business – and something that worked."

Edge also wanted a local resource who was a small enough business that they would come to their office and provide assistance if necessary.



Michael Haley
Edge Solutions President

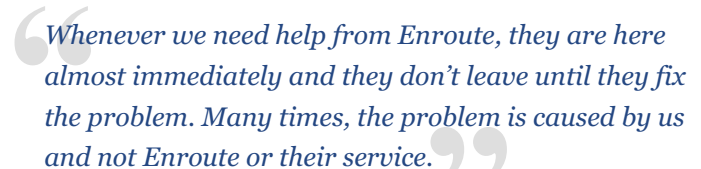
"Our goal was to create some synergy and make sure that we got good service rather than going through some big company where we might fall through cracks," states Haley. "Our technology partner recommended Enroute."

Solution

The Enroute Networks team met with the principals at Edge Solutions and recommended a Cisco VoIP solution using Call Manager Express. The system incorporates hard-wired Cisco 7961 phones at the main office as well as remote offices requiring a stationary telephony solution.

For remote users, Enroute Networks proposed using Cisco soft phones – software-managed VoIP connections that forward employees' calls to wherever they might be – at home, on their cell phones, using VoIP from their laptops or at other specified numbers. This aspect of the system dovetails perfectly with Edge Solutions' business model – and operating mantra.

"We are able to provide a service level that is equal to or better than other service partners because we are so nimble," says Haley. Yet, he notes, there is plenty of room for expansion, as the Cisco system can grow to 60 users without the need for a software or hardware upgrade.



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Tangible Benefits

"On a service level, thanks to our soft phones, I can be anywhere and look like I'm in my office," says Theresa Jackson, Business Development Specialist for Edge.

However, Haley notes that the benefits of the system go far beyond the operational flexibility Edge Solutions sought initially.


"We definitely have seen improvements in connectivity and our production as well," he says. "We have also seen zero downtime for our organization. Whenever we need help from Enroute, they are here almost immediately and they don't leave until they fix the problem. Many times, the problem is caused by us and not Enroute or their service."

Haley also touts the low costs associated with the system and Enroute Networks for small businesses like his. "I worked for a big business, and these guys are so affordable. Every time they help us, we don't get a huge bill because they helped. They are conscious of the financial constraints around a small business. I'm not afraid that every time I call them for support, it will generate some huge bill because they don't treat us that way. I'm thankful for it."

Edge Solutions has come a long way since January 2009 - in terms of both growth and infrastructure - when a handful of startup employees were running the business from their cell phones. Today, the company has grown from three full-time employees to 29, a success Haley credits at least in part to the Cisco solution Enroute Networks designed for them.

"If we were still trying to run a business on cell phones, clients would have to associate each person with a different number. With VoIP, the phone can follow an employee basically 24x7, whether he or she is on a cell phone, or sitting at a desk or using the laptop as a phone. It gives clients easy access to everyone in our organization."

Haley also says the company never considered a more traditional (and expensive) solution, having full confidence that VoIP - and Enroute Networks - was the right answer. "This is about service level and productivity to our customer. I know that our service levels have increased based on the solution that Enroute provided to us."



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