



## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

# CISCO SYSTEMS TELEWORKING TECHNOLOGY HELPS UNUMPROVIDENT RETAIN ITS MOST VALUED CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### CUSTOMER

- UnumProvident Corporation

#### INDUSTRY

- Insurance Products and Services

#### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Retain the best call center agents to maintain quality and reduce training costs
- Increase availability of valuable office space
- Keep service levels high to help ensure customer satisfaction
- Deploy teleworking links that are secure, reliable, and easy to manage

#### NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco® Business Ready Teleworker solution using Cisco 831 Routers, Cisco 7200 Series Routers with VPN Accelerator Modules, Cisco CallManager Version 3.3, Cisco IP phones, and Cisco IP Communicator softphones
- CiscoWorks LAN Management Solution for network administration

#### BUSINESS VALUE

- Prevents incurring the cost of acquiring and training new employees, and boosts the productivity of current workers
- Benefits customers by maintaining service levels and safeguarding personal information
- Extends network control and helps ensure continuity of operations

The Cisco Systems® Business Ready Teleworker solution gives managers at insurance leader UnumProvident a way to increase job satisfaction for their high-producing call center agents, while also reducing expenses, maintaining service levels, and helping ensure security and manageability.

**“We’ve saved on hiring and training costs by decreasing call center turnover. Productivity has actually gone up. And teleworking has caused no lapse in response time. It’s almost seamless.”**

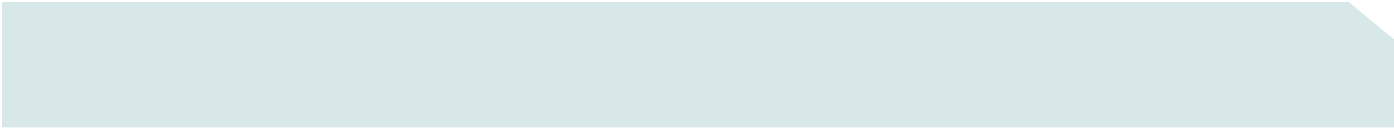
—Joe Aube, Systems Consultant & Remote Access Project Manager, UnumProvident

### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Market leader UnumProvident provides disability and other types of income-protection insurance to more than 45 percent of the Fortune 500 companies, thousands of smaller firms, and a host of individual policyholders. The company’s call center acts as a critical contact point for customers and brokers who want accurate information about claims, benefits, and other policy matters.

Because of the demanding nature of the work, the call center units located at the UnumProvident main offices in Chattanooga, Tennessee and in Portland, Maine had been experiencing high turnover. On top of the job stress, many call center staff members have to make arduous commutes—up to two hours a day. However, UnumProvident can ill afford to lose experienced call center representatives. Knowledgeable, responsive agents are crucial to good customer relations, and training new agents is an expensive process that involves six to eight weeks of classroom instruction and another two weeks of on-the-job supervision. What’s more, UnumProvident considers worker retention a strategic advantage in achieving the company’s growth objectives.

Management decided to reward and motivate UnumProvident’s most productive call center agents by giving them the option of working from home. “Only the highest performing employees were given the opportunity, and in return they agreed to a one-year employment commitment,” says Joe Aube, UnumProvident systems consultant and remote access project manager. “We needed to provide a full-time, home-based work environment that would give agents the same access to applications and services, and the same level of security, they have available to them when they work at a corporate site.”



Converting a portion of the call center staff to teleworkers would also help free up limited office space. According to Operations Manager Cindy Robinson, “We were short of space in our Chattanooga office, but we would be able to stay in our present location if a significant number of people worked at home.”

Another important consideration was maintaining excellent service levels. “We have very stringent guidelines for how we service our callers,” Robinson states. “In fact, service levels are so important that statistics are reported to our executives daily. We’re committed to answering at least 80 percent of calls in less than 20 seconds. If network connections to the teleworkers were to cause delays or go down, it would seriously impact our business.”

Security was also a major concern, since the network carries personal information about policyholders as well as sensitive corporate data. “There are several VPN solutions out there,” notes UnumProvident Network Engineer Jimmy Dotson. “But in addition to excellent security we also wanted a familiar management interface, good support from a major vendor, and solution that would interoperate well with our legacy equipment.”

In addition to providing secure broadband links to teleworkers, UnumProvident also wanted to deploy routers that could provide a robust backup capability for the company’s frame relay WAN connections to approximately 40 field offices. Many of the field office employees use CiscoIP phones and IP Communicator softphones connected through a Cisco CallManager Version 3.3 system. It is essential to the business that voice and data communications among the sites stay up and running even if a failure occurs.

## **NETWORK SOLUTION**

Following an extensive planning phase and a small pilot deployment, UnumProvident rolled out its Cisco Business Ready Teleworker solution to about 90 call center agents in the Chattanooga and Portland areas. Each home office is equipped with a Cisco 831 Router linked through a secure broadband connection to Cisco 7200 Series Routers equipped with VPN Accelerator Modules at headends in the campus locations. Network integrator MegaPath handled the provisioning and assists UnumProvident in managing the connections.

“Before we connect a home office, the call center managers make sure that particular home offers a suitable environment for the agent,” Aube says. “There needs to be a dedicated workspace where distractions can be minimized. Once the space is ready, the Cisco equipment can be installed easily. For security reasons only business-related traffic is allowed over the broadband connection—we can tell if an unauthorized device has been added.”

Cisco 831 Routers provide the home workers with secure, always-on broadband (cable or DSL, depending on local service availability) connections in a single, economical platform. The routers deliver enterprise-level security with hardware-accelerated IP Security (IPSec) and Triple Data Encryption Standard (3DES) VPN encryption, and a built-in stateful-inspection firewall. “The Cisco 831 Routers give us both flexibility and control,” declares Dotson. They can be managed easily as extensions to the network using CiscoWorks and our other SNMP [Simple Network Management Protocol]-based management tools.”

UnumProvident also uses the routers to back up its WAN and help ensure fast failover for business-critical communications. “The Cisco 831 and Cisco 7200 combination is considerably more flexible and secure than our previous setup,” Dotson says. “We’re able to run a routing protocol and tunnel to three locations—Chattanooga, Portland, and Columbia, South Carolina—to provide redundancy.” The compact Cisco 7200 Series Routers offer exceptional price/performance with a wide range of connectivity options and feature support. And their quality of service (QoS) capabilities allow UnumProvident to prioritize its time-sensitive voice and video traffic.

## **BUSINESS VALUE**

The Cisco Business Ready Teleworker solution has allowed UnumProvident to make call center work more pleasant and rewarding for the teleworkers, and the company has realized a number of business benefits as a result. “We’ve saved on hiring and training costs by decreasing call center turnover,” according to Aube. “Productivity has actually gone up. And teleworking has caused no lapse in response time. It’s almost seamless. From a performance standpoint, the users really can’t tell the difference between working at home and in the office.”

The teleworking solution has also made the call center more responsive to the business. Robinson explains: “Representatives hired and living in Chattanooga can log on the ACD [automatic call distribution] system in Portland and take calls that are received there. So we can direct calls to agents with specific knowledge or application skills, regardless of where they live or where the databases reside.”

Dotson observes that the move to teleworking hasn’t caused any service level or security problems. “The service level issue is priority number one, because if we don’t continue to service our customers promptly, they’ll take their business somewhere else. Plus, the VPN tunneling keeps the connections secure, and that’s important when you’re dealing with lots of personal information, including in many cases medical information. We’re primarily a Cisco shop, and we wanted equipment that worked well with what we already have.”

The Cisco-based network is robust enough to accommodate high-bandwidth, delay-sensitive video traffic. “Cisco came in and we set up a video room, so employees in all locations can tie into video as they need it for things like presentations and white board sessions,” Dotson says. “Some field offices also have a video capability now. We will eventually use multicast to communicate executive announcements and other corporate information to the entire company.”

Regarding manageability, Dotson says that “the teleworking is a little bit more difficult to support from the network side of the house because there are more devices and more software to keep track of, but we definitely picked a solution that is easy to manage. All the units are SNMP-compliant, so we can employ CiscoWorks, HP OpenView, and other industry-standard management tools without compatibility problems.”

## **NEXT STEPS**

UnumProvident plans to expand its teleworking initiative to keep pace with business growth and to attract more good employees. “In places like Maine there are many people who can do the work and do it well,” Aube notes. “But they live too far away from the office to commute every day. We hope to have several more teleworkers online soon.”

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

To find out more about the Cisco Business Ready Teleworker solution, visit our Website at <http://www.cisco.com/go/teleworker>.

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