



Engineering Firm Cuts Telecom Costs 33% with Presidio Networked Solutions and Cisco UC Solution

Pennoni Associates Inc., teams with Presidio to implement Cisco Unified Communications solution to slash phone costs, and dial-in collaboration, productivity, and efficiency.

Executive Summary

Pennoni Associates Inc.

- Multi-disciplined consulting engineering firm
- Twenty-two offices in nine states, headquartered in Philadelphia.
- 850 nationwide

Business Challenge

- Prohibitive phone toll and conference calling costs
- Aging, growingly obsolete telecom network
- 200% growth over six years put heavy strain on infrastructure

Network Solution

- New unified voice, data and video network
- Call-processing solution for enhanced collaboration
- Advanced phones making it easy for employees to use new solution

Business Results

- Cut telecommunication costs by approx. \$10,000/month
- Improved enterprise-wide communication and collaboration
- Reliable, scalable foundation for future growth and goals



Business Challenge

Established in 1966, Pennoni Associates Inc., is a leading multi-disciplined consulting engineering firm, providing a broad spectrum of engineering services to government, private, commercial, industrial and construction clients across the United States. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the company's 850 employees staff 22 offices in nine states.

Pennoni's dynamic success during the past six years led the company to double in size through growth and acquisitions. However, the company's communications and network didn't keep pace. Additionally, its increasingly obsolete phone system was contributing to \$30,000 per month in voice and data charges with little room for reduction.

"We had worked with an obsolete telecommunications infrastructure for nearly three years," Pennoni's Director of Information Technology/Associate Vice President, Markus Weidner explains.

"By 2006, a lot of our equipment was day to day. If we had a power outage, for instance, our phone systems would lose programming, and we could be down for a while waiting on the phone company for repairs. On top of that, our system wasn't equipped with modern functionality like VoIP, so we were at an impasse.

"We knew we needed a new system, but it didn't make sense for us to address one or two individual offices. We required a holistic approach to overhauling our communication infrastructure that would provide our entire corporate network with the resources and scalability to grow and expand for years to come. Additionally, we wanted a solution that would not only save us money but actually indirectly generate revenue through collaboration and productivity enhancements."

Network Solution

In early 2006, Pennoni began reviewing potential solution providers including Nortel, Avaya and ShoreTel, before deciding on Cisco and Greenbelt, Maryland-based Presidio Networked Solutions, a gold-certified and master unified communications specialized Cisco partner.

"After speaking with Presidio and Cisco phone and networking specialists, we felt comfortable they were the most responsive to our needs and most understanding of the scope and scale of our goals," says Weidner.

"The real turning point to go with Cisco and Presidio was their combined experience. We didn't want to be a beta test for a smaller company and needed to be sure we would have the robust support we were looking for. Plus, the Cisco solution easily integrates with third parties, including our existing Microsoft CRM and IM applications.

"And when you actually evaluate the Cisco offering coupled with Presidio's added value, the combined offering is quite price competitive. Pure voice providers have to make an additional investment in core equipment anyway. So when everything was on the table for our complete solution, the price difference was negligible."

Pennoni and Presidio began implementing several Cisco solutions in mid-November 2006. Cisco Unified Communications (UC) provided the foundation for the communication platform, seamlessly streamlining business processes and collaboration by integrating voice, video and data networks. Cisco UC's standards-based applications integrate with Pennoni's existing business tools like Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Office Communicator, enabling the company to quickly and easily access its people, resources and information regardless of location.

Cisco Unified Communications Manager 5.1 (formerly Cisco Unified CallManager) was implemented as the call-processing component of the Cisco UC system. The scalable, distributable, and highly available solution enables unified messaging, multimedia conferencing, collaborative contact centers, and interactive multimedia response capabilities. This gave Pennoni complete control of its phone system to improve efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness.

Complementing its UC Manager solution, Pennoni implemented Cisco Unity Unified Messaging 4.2, which unites all voice, fax and email messages in the same mailbox for easy retrieval from any phone, computer or mobile device. This feature-rich platform lets users listen to, compose, reply to, forward, and delete voice messages via the Web.

Pennoni also added Cisco Unified MeetingPlace Express to its new communication infrastructure. The integrated voice, video, and Web conferencing solution makes it easy for employees to set up and attend meetings from a variety of different interfaces, including Microsoft Outlook calendars.

The final piece of the Pennoni solution is Cisco 7900-Series Unified IP Phones. With color LCD displays, dynamic soft keys for automated use of advanced call features and functions, and easy access to a variety of information, Cisco IP phones bring all the advantages of the Cisco solution directly to Pennoni employees' desks.

Since Presidio was involved in scoping the project from its infancy, the team and the solution were ready to go as soon as Weidner said go.

"Set-up took less than two weeks and our core system was up and running a few weeks after that," Weidner says. "By the end of December, we had a functioning Cisco system, and on January 15 of this year, our Wilmington, Delaware, location was the first to go live. Once we had the first one under our belt, the rest came pretty easily and quickly. We did six more sites in six weeks, and by the end of April, we were finished with all 22 locations."

One of the stipulations Weidner made clear to Presidio and Cisco was he and his team needed to be self sufficient enough to implement, manage and troubleshoot the UC solution.

"In January, Presidio and a team of Cisco representatives held training for our internal IT staff to get them up to speed," Weidner explains. "We shadowed them for the first six implementations, then rolled out all the equipment on our own to all remaining sites. We also trained all employees to use the system. We're confident in our ownership of the system and require no further outside help to use or maintain it."

"We can now share our desktops, conduct remote training and join calls anytime without worrying about cost. It's really improved the way we work."

Markus Weidner
Director of Information
Technology/Associate VP
Pennoni Associates Inc.



Business Results

As projected, Pennoni's Cisco solution has paid off immediately – both in measurable cost savings and in increased productivity, efficiency and capabilities.

"With the Cisco solution, we've cut our telecommunication costs by about \$10,000 per month as a result of flat-fee nationwide calling and by reducing our Verizon phone lines by about 80 percent," says Weidner. "That's roughly a third of our previous monthly expenditure. And we expect it to drop even further as we continue our network consolidation. We're earning money back immediately on our Cisco investment, and the more offices we add to the system, the better economy we realize."

Beyond the hard-cost advantages, the Cisco Unified Communications solution enables Pennoni to work in new and more productive ways. Employees receive voicemail through their email, can dial or transfer calls to anyone throughout the company via four-digit extension, and can call mobile or land lines with a couple clicks in the company directory.

"Our Cisco solution has really changed the way we work," says Weidner. "It enables our employees to work more closely with each other and our clients. With the presence functionality, it's easy to see where people are and if they're available, and to loop them into calls and IM chats with a click."

"Our staff is now more available to our clients and able to respond to their needs more quickly and effectively. Messages are forwarded to email, which people check on their mobile devices far more frequently than through their voicemail."

Weidner adds that without the prohibitive cost-per-minute of phone-provider conference calling, the company is collaborating more closely and more often.

"By integrating Unified MeetingPlace Express and UC Manager, we've created a conference bridge that's ideal for Web collaboration," he says. "We can now share our desktops, conduct remote training and join calls anytime without worrying about cost. It's really improved the way we work."

Additionally, Weidner says he is also impressed with Presidio's implementation team and with the Cisco solution's intuitive functionality and reliability.

"In IT, you usually only hear about the problems," he says. But our employees have been very positive about the solution. Everyone was ready for a modern telecommunication system, and this has surpassed our expectations.

"We've had no system-related faults. Cisco technology and equipment is exceptional. And if there is a minor problem or bug, we know support is there for us. It's everything we hoped for when choosing an established vendor like Cisco and a well respected partner like Presidio."



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Director of Information Technology/
Associate VP, Pennoni Associates Inc.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, Weidner says Pennoni plans to build on its Cisco Unified Communications platform to further boost collaboration. They’ll soon engage Presidio to help implement Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, which richly integrates with UC Manager to allow people to connect with people using the applications they use most.

“We’ll expand our Web-collaboration platform to enable drag-and-drop functionality into IM dialogues,” he explains. “This will take our Web sharing to the next level and provide seamless, nearly instant communication over the network.”

“With the Cisco Unified Communications solution as our network foundation, we have the flexibility and power to add features as our needs grow and evolve. It’s one of the main reasons we chose Cisco and Presidio, and our solution’s performance to date has only added to our confidence in our decision.”

Product List

Voice and IP Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager 5.1 (formerly Cisco Unified CallManager)
- Cisco Unity Unified Messaging 4.2
- Cisco Unified MeetingPlace Express
- Cisco 7900-Series Unified IP Phones

For More Information

To find out more about Presidio, visit
<http://www.presidio.com>.

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