



## Cisco Partner Total Communications Helps New Connecticut Convention Center Exhibit Greatness

### Industry

Hospitality

### Business Challenge

- Design and provide state-of-the-art technology for a new convention center that was 2-to-3 years away from opening. The center was designed and constructed during major advancements in communications and networking technology.
- The technology needed to be state-of-the-art at the time of opening to accommodate the diverse needs of the wide variety of organizations that would book conferences at the new convention center.

### Network Solution

Cisco Premier Partner Total Communications designed an end-to-end Cisco solution with integrated fiber optic data, voice, and video network featuring Cisco Unified Communications. The team deployed a Cisco 4507 core switch, layer 2 and 3 switching capabilities, PoE switches that would enable wireless access points and Cisco Unified Communications. Applications laid on top of the architecture include two Cisco Unified CallManagers, Cisco Unity, Cisco Unified IP Phones, and conferencing units.

### Business Value

Exhibitors booking conferences and meetings at the Connecticut Convention Center have Cisco Unified Communications at their fingertips, along with high-speed and wireless connectivity. Total Communications provides bandwidth and on-site support as needed for exhibitors, creating a revenue stream from bookings and making it a business partner with the convention center management team.

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Back in 2002, planners for the new Connecticut Convention Center were planning technology needs for the 540,000 square foot facility. A new multi-services network would have to handle the diverse needs of the many different exhibitors that would book events there, and with the center opening in Summer 2005, the team had to prepare for the technology developments that would transpire in the years before the opening.

“This facility was designed and constructed during a huge metamorphosis of technology — wireless was a vision being beta tested when we were laying out plans, but an absolute necessity by the time we opened the building,” says Ben Seidel, then executive director of the Connecticut Convention Center. Since the Center opened, Seidel has been named vice president of Waterford Venue Services, which professionally manages the Convention Center. “It was critical to have a multi-purpose platform to consolidate all telephony infrastructure into one backbone, and have expandability to accommodate future technology.”

Seidel hired a consultant just to sort through vendor responses and determine which were feasible. He ultimately committed to a VoIP platform and a backbone to support wireless. Although at that time IP telephony was a very new technology, he recognized the savings over a typical PBX, and with more usability and functionality. Back then only a couple of companies delivered IP telephony. Ultimately, Seidel chose Total Communications, a local Cisco Premier Certified Partner.

“Working locally and understanding a small business were big advantages for us in winning this contract,” says Tom Donahue, major account representative for Total Communications. Although the convention center was a huge project, if you take away the square footage it’s really a small business with 104 employees.”



“Total Communications knows the technology in this building intimately, and they have a very strong relationship with Cisco,”

Ben Seidel  
Vice President, Waterford Venue Services



“Total Communications understood our goals and had strong support from Cisco,” says Seidel. “Since they are local it was easy to work together, and ultimately they would understand the types of businesses most likely to book with the convention center in the early days.”

The Total Communications team, including Donahue and Jeff Nyland, director of multi-services, started a large number of discussions with Seidel including how they would provide technology available a few years down the road, while accommodating diverse technology needs of the variety of organizations that would be booking conferences at the center. By prioritizing and focusing on key deliverables they could adjust the design of the core and other aspects of the network while ensuring it remained redundant and resilient.

Seidel and his team had to have long-term technology vision because the convention center was several years away from opening. They depended on Total Communications and Cisco to ensure that the center would not be obsolete when it opened. The Total Communications team recommended an end-to-end Cisco solution starting with a core network 4507 switch. PoE (Power over Ethernet) switches were put into closets to deliver layer 2 and 3 switching capabilities, plus power over any Ethernet port which gave the center the ability to put a wireless access point or a Cisco Unified Phone anywhere. Once the core was built, applications were laid on top of it. These included Cisco Unified Communications with Cisco Unified CallManager call processing software, Cisco Unity for integrated voice messaging, and a variety of Cisco Unified IP Phones and 7935 conferencing units. A Cisco IP Communicator with 7914 expansion modules would deliver enhanced telephony support through the PC

The teams carefully worked through convention scenarios, how the floor plan might change as each exhibition comes in and matching that to a cable plan.

“In the end everything needs to work at any booth anywhere on the floor including telephone connections, high-speed data connectivity, heavy-duty electrical, water and drainage,” says Nyland. “Logistically that took many hours to work out.”

This pre-planning and teamwork has provided the convention center with flexibility to support any variety of exhibitors, regardless of communication or multimedia demands. An integrated fiber optic data, voice and video network, wireless communications enables exhibitors and guests to link to the Internet from anywhere in the building, and powers video screens.

Seidel designed a business management structure in which Total Communications provides technical enabling and support for exhibitors, making it a partner of the Connecticut Convention Center. Total Communications provides tremendous bandwidth to the convention center so that it can provide high-end technology services such as video streaming when needed. The center benefits by paying only for bandwidth it actually uses.

“Total Communications knows the technology in this building intimately, and they have a very strong relationship with Cisco,” says Seidel. “They can solve issues efficiently and help ensure that all technology demands are met.”



The Connecticut Convention Center opened in Summer 2005 and is humming along with a steady stream of bookings — approximately 400 separate events before the end of 2006 at present count. The vision of the center's technology needs, and those of its exhibitors, fell squarely on the shoulders of Total Communications.

"It all came down to the critical multi-services approach," says Donahue. "And not just for the Convention Center, but for all of our customers. We start every conversation learning about a customer's business. Once we understand their vertical, certain deliverables come out of that: we put in a properly designed network that is robust and resilient, but the right size. If data is critical to the business, we do that first. If Cisco Unified Communications on top of that is a good move, we'll add it. Wireless and video options continue to come along. It's showing customers that these network functions are sharing the same infrastructure and switches but can do so much more. It makes for a very snappy presentation, but it's also true!"



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