

Cowboys Triumph With 3Com Enterprise VoIP, Data, and Wireless Solutions

Organization: The Dallas Cowboys

Location: Irving, TX

Employees: 350

Market Segment: Professional Sports

Applications: 3Com eXchange Call Center Solution; voice conferencing; order fulfillment, Internet access; remote connectivity

The Challenge

One of the premier franchises in National Football League (NFL) history, the Dallas Cowboys, (www.dallascowboys.com), have appeared in eight Super Bowl championship games and won five since its founding in 1960. Based in Irving, TX, just outside of Dallas, the Cowboys, though preparing to open a new venue in 2009, still play their home games at Texas Stadium. Nearby, the Cowboys Valley Ranch location houses the team's practice facilities, as well as coaches and administrators offices. The football team's third site, the Dallas Cowboys Merchandise (DCM) and warehouse center, processes all order taking and fulfillment for Cowboys -brand apparel and other products.

As on the football field, communications are vital to the Cowboys' success. From coaches to executives, and marketing personnel, employees require dependable telephony services to connect with fans, the league, vendors, and media. They also need reliable, high-speed access to revenue-driven data applications and the Internet.

Previously, however, the team's legacy voice and data systems struggled to keep pace with the Cowboys' growth. Its PBX systems experienced occasional outages due to maintenance requirements and parts failures. The legacy PBX also required the NFL team to contract third-party vendors even for simple moves/adds/changes, adding significant operational costs. Moreover, as growing sales increased DCM's order taking and fulfillment, the PBXs could not easily expand to meet the added demand.



In addition, the Cowboys Fast Ethernet networks from 3Com, while effective for years, needed to be upgraded to meet the team's growing resiliency and scalability requirements. With customers calling 24/7 to purchase luxury suites and tickets, the Cowboys needed a redundant network core enabling sales staff to access the data required to process orders without delay. The team also wanted wireless access in all conference rooms to facilitate presentations and in the Texas Stadium Press Box to allow reporters to file game-day stories more efficiently, and in the Stadium Club for high-speed Internet access.

Why 3Com Solutions

The Cowboys wanted a secure enterprise-class communications infrastructure to unite its sites. The team required a call center application that would allow DCM sales agents to streamline order fulfillment, proven wireless systems, and a reliable, high-performance network core with edge switches. After considering VoIP solutions from 3Com, Nortel, Avaya, and Cisco, the Cowboys determined that 3Com® systems offered all the capabilities it demanded with a superior business value over competing products. The team also selected 3Com wireless access points and powerful core and edge switches.

"We went with a secure, converged 3Com solution in part because we are a satisfied 3Com customer," Peter Walsh, Cowboys' head of Information Technology. "But the most important reason the Dallas Cowboys chose 3Com was teamwork. 3Com was the one company that stepped up as our technology partner. They were committed to make their products work for us."

The Cowboys deployed 3Com NBX® V5000 IP Telephony System at Texas Stadium, DCM, and Valley Ranch, which are linked by T1 lines of its WAN. The Cowboys implemented the 3Com eXchange Call Center Solution to support a 15-seat call center at DCM. The Cowboys also are using secure, 3Com Access Point 7250, as well as intelligent SuperStack® 3 4400 traffic prioritization switches. Team executives even enjoy corporate class connectivity from home using the secure, cost-effective OfficeConnect 108Mbps 802.11g POE wireless system, and the storied NFL franchise is planning on migrating its core network switches to resilient, 10-Gigabit ready 3Com Switch 7700s.



VoIP

By converging its voice and data traffic using 3Com systems, the Cowboys are saving thousands of dollars a month from eliminating maintenance, long-distance calls between its sites and training camp, and PRI circuit costs. The reliable NBX V5000 system, which today supports 300 phones and can scale to 1,500, further enabled the team to reduce its previous outage rate to just four minutes of off-business-hours outages in the past year. The VoIP system's NBX NetSet built-in administrative application allows IT staff control telephony in-house, ensuring voice services are always optimized for productivity.

eXchange Call Center

The 3Com eXchange Call Center application seamlessly integrates with the Cowboys' NBX phone system to provide a scalable, full-featured solution for managing customer service calls for the team's branded products. With its modular design, the platform supports up to 250 agents and 2,000 calls per hour, allowing the franchise to incrementally increase its call-center services to meet demand rapidly and cost-effectively. It also allows network administrators to control the call center's call distribution, handling, and reporting, ensuring every customer's query is handled quickly and efficiently.

"3Com's call center solution is an ideal complement to our NBX systems because they all scale so simply and affordably," said Jerry Jones Jr., chief marketing and sales officer, Dallas Cowboys. "It allows us to manage customer relationships more efficiently."

Wireless

Initially deploying 3Com Access Point 7250s in the Press Box for 200 reporters covering Monday Night Football in 2004, the Cowboys today use the 3Com systems to provide high-speed Internet access at the Stadium Club and for network-based presentations in various conference rooms. The standards-based systems deliver continuous connectivity at up to 54 megabits per second (Mbps). They also feature built-in manageability, encryption, and support for multiple security options to keep data secure at all times.

"In the past, reporters queued up to file their stories using dial-up phone lines. Now they are delighted with the speed, simplicity and stress-free access 3Com wireless systems provides them," said Walsh. "The systems are also a big win for our Stadium Club clients and in house staff, who now can use their laptops to wirelessly access the information they need."

Switching

The Cowboys equipped its LANs with 10/100 Switch 4400s, which prioritize voice and other time-sensitive traffic. At the end of the 2005 season, the team plans to deploy a 3Com Switch 7700 with a redundant fabric providing continuously available telephony at Valley Ranch. It also plans to equip Texas Stadium and DCM with Switch 7700s, ensuring non-stop network access for sales agents and other staff. The multilayer switches deliver up to 292 Gigabit or 288 Fast Ethernet ports with available 10-Gigabit modules for high-capacity inter-switch connections.



Benefits Summary

Using its secure, converged 3Com infrastructure, the Dallas Cowboys organization today is better meeting the challenges required to succeed in the NFL. From maximizing opportunities to sell team apparel and tickets to providing staff, clients, and reporters with more convenient information access and sharing, the Cowboys have all their communications needs covered for a remarkable return on investment.

"We're glad to have 3Com on our side because they have proven to be rock solid and provide an outstanding ROI," said Jones Jr. "Choosing 3Com is part of a winning strategy for our franchise and a major contributor to our communications team."