

Bob Barker Company moves to ice Contact Center and Skype for Business to eliminate servers, connect departments and save \$15,000/month

Summary

Bob Barker Company, America's leading detention supplier, migrated their call centers from Cisco Unified Communications platform to ComputerTalk's ice Contact Center on Skype for Business. The move to the cloud saved the company \$15,000 per month in infrastructure; empowered the call center manager with enhanced capabilities to manage her team more effectively; and provided real-time insights and better control to individual customer service agents through an intuitive interface. The company-wide move to Skype for Business and Office 365 unified the company's communication platform, enabling better customer service and increased opportunity for innovation.

"Our goal is to make IT transparent. The technology shouldn't be the focus of a call center's job; their focus is to provide a good customer experience and make the customer happy. The technology should disappear. For all the technology we bring in, it's imperative that it is best-in-class and satisfies all of our needs, but at the end of the day you want it to disappear, so they can actually do their job."

Randy Robbins

Director of Information Technology for Bob Barker Company

Company background

The Bob Barker Company, America's leading detention supplier, provides material goods and services to correctional facilities across the country. Their online catalog offers thousands of products – from inmate exercise equipment and educational tools, to safety razors and soap, to transport vans and embroidered officer uniforms – that support the unique needs of incarceration facilities.

Bob Barker Company's mission and vision encourage great customer service and continued innovation. Randy Robbins, the Director of Information Technology for Bob Barker Company, recognized a way to knit these ideals together and deliver both improved customer service and new opportunities for innovation by switching to ComputerTalk's ice Contact Center that runs on Skype for Business.

Situation description

Over 60% of orders placed to Bob Barker come in through the phone. The company operates two call centers, one in North Carolina and one in Utah. In order to support these centers, Robbins' team housed, managed and maintained ten servers and specialized phone hardware that ran Cisco Unified Communication Center.

The motivation to migrate to a new contact center solution arose from inefficiencies and frustrations experienced in the call centers as well as from Robbins' goal to "make the company nimbler and faster by taking advantage of the cloud and other people's expertise."

“We have far richer real-time data we can display up on our dashboards within the call center so everyone knows what’s going on. Instead of having to say, ‘what did we do yesterday?’ They actually know right now, and they can react faster to make changes. It’s far more powerful. Our call center manager is just in the cloud.”

Challenges under the old system

The Cisco system presented Robbins and his team with many time-intensive activities and challenges aside from datacenter management.

- **System administration:** Even simple administration tasks required an IT team member or outside consultants. A Cisco consultant was required to come in to take the phones down for team meetings and small changes to work processes took hours of IT time.
- **Set-up:** Establishing a desk for a new hire at the call center was so complicated that only one IT person knew all the required steps. It took her a minimum of 30 minutes to set up the user in Cisco’s Call Manager, Unity (for VM), and Contact Center.
- **CRM integration:** When a call came in, a customer service agent would start by manually pulling up the account through the in-house CRM (customer relationship management) tool. While there had initially been a connection established between the Cisco and the CRM, it broke so frequently that it wasn’t useful.
- **Call quality:** Customer service agents repeatedly complained about poor call quality issues and being unable to hear the customer. Cisco blamed the problem on the carrier and the carrier blamed it on Cisco, etc.
- **Diagnostics and analytics:** Diagnostics and reports were arduous and time consuming. IT spent hours pulling user files, status files and text files to create reports that were, at the least, one day old. Robbins described the process as “ugly.”

No concessions with ice Contact Center on Skype for Business

The Bob Barker made a company-wide move to Office 365 before upgrading their call center solution. This made Skype for Business an attractive option, however, Robbins insisted on finding a solution that didn’t require them to make any concessions on capabilities or cost.

The Phone Upgrade team spent six months thoroughly investigating cloud-based contact center options before finding ice from ComputerTalk. “For so many different reasons Skype for Business was the platform for everything except the call center – until we found Brandon and his folks [ComputerTalk], and then we could do it all,” Robbins said.

Once the decision was made, ice went live in a couple months. Testing took a few weeks. Training took 3 days across the two locations. “One of our biggest issues was cutting through our old carrier’s red tape. Aside from that, it couldn’t have been easier,” Robbins explained.

“We’ve moved on to something else.”

Migrating to ice on Skype for Business eliminated all ten servers in the datacenter making the Bob Barker call center fully cloud-based. “That’s more than \$15,000 savings every month plus major improvements in administration,” Robbins said.

Best of all, the elimination of infrastructure maintenance and system administration freed up IT to move onto other activities. Robbins

estimates the move saved an additional 2½ days of work every week.

“The power it gives the team lead to manage her team effectively has been tremendous.”

The call center manager can use simple toggle switches in her administrative portal now to handle many of the tasks that used to take technical experts hours. From turning on and off the phones, to managing call recording and call quality, to setting up permissions and changing queues, the Skype for Business platform simplifies time-consuming, complex activities and gives non-technical users better control.

Now the call center manager can run her team and respond to their needs on her schedule. It completely removes IT from their daily work flow.

“The day to day is so much better because we have so much more information.”

With Cisco, if the call center manager wanted to make changes or do diagnostics, it was a nightmare for IT, but now it’s an afterthought handled directly by customer service agents through their ice interface. ice leverages the real-time dashboards, built-in analytics and monitoring systems that are built on top of Skype for Business to give customer service agents the information they need to be more self-sufficient.

This real-time information allows the manager to manage proactively. She can head off problems before they happen and take advantage of valuable training opportunities.

“It [Ice on Skype for Business] completely ties into email and everything Office 365 offers. All the hooks for our entire ecosystem are there. Where before it was 3 or 4 systems you had to work around in, now it’s all connected.”

ComputerTalk built an app layer that sits between ice and Bob Barker’s in-house CRM using universal connectors. Now when a new call comes in, ice takes the phone number and performs a data dip to open the customer CRM account automatically. There’s no time wasted locating records or pulling up the database. In the future, Robbins envisions migrating their in-house database to Dynamics365 for even deeper integration and connectivity.

“The quality’s been fantastic. Everyone’s just been astounded.”

In addition to giving customer service agents clear visibility into their work and providing real-time information to help them do their job better, the call quality problems are completely gone.

Initial feedback from the call center was, “I can hear the customer and they can hear me now,” Robbins said. Gone are the unsolvable issues with call quality. Gone is the finger pointing between the carrier and vendors. Robbins says with ice on Skype for Business, “The interface is much better for sure. It just works.”

“This whole project has basically changed our entire company.”

The move to ice strategically coincided with rolling out Skype for Business across the entire company which Robbin’s describes as “a game changer for our entire company. We couldn’t have done it without ice because the call center is such a big part of what we do.”

From the new Surface Hub technology installed in the company’s conference rooms, to IM capabilities available anywhere through cell

phones, to email, to web-directed inquires and more, everything works together on the Office 365 and Skype for Business platform. "Every day there are improvements and enhancements to Office 365 that we can take advantage of. We are a Tableau customer for BI today, now we're evaluating moving to Power BI because there are so many compelling reasons to keep it under the same umbrella if you can."

Previously chat, presence and the contact center all ran on separate systems making it cumbersome and inefficient for helping customer service agents find answers to customer questions. With Skype for Business as the single, shared platform across the contact center and company today, agents can see who is online and available to help them and IM about an order while the customer is on the call.

Skype for Business makes it possible for the contact center to be everywhere now. This past year, Bob Barker added a mobile salesforce

across the country. "Being mobile is a tremendous need and Skype for Business is a perfect solution."

"If I were starting a company from scratch, I wouldn't look anywhere else. It [Office 365] just has all the pieces."

Looking forward, Randy explains how he sees Microsoft helping him realize his cloud-based dream for the company:

"At the end of the day, one of my goals is to get everything into the Microsoft cloud because it just fits with what we've been doing for a while and it fits with my vision for what makes the most sense for our company. Our next step after this is evaluating Dynamics 365 and seeing if we can take advantage of all the ways these pieces interact and comeingle. I think that's the smartest thing for our company."

To learn more about the ice contact center by ComputerTalk, visit: <http://www.computer-talk.com/enterprise-products/ice-contact-center>