



Unified Communications and collaboration upgrade gets manufacturer up and running

Customer Profile: Helmsburg, Indiana-based For Bare Feet is a manufacturer of

specialty socks for adults and children. The company produces thousands of designs for resorts, national parks, gift stores, sporting goods chains and more. It is also a league-licensed producer of socks, headbands and wristbands for the NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL and WNBA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
FOR BARE FEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing • Helmsburg, Indiana USA • 130 employees across the USA and UK
BUSINESS CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antiquated telecom network • Global communications • Collaboration with customers and suppliers
NETWORK SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade Cisco Call Manager from v 3.0 to 8.0 • Install Cisco Catalyst switches • Install Cisco G2 ISR 2900 routers • Virtualize network
BUSINESS RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero latency or call jittering • Improved collaboration between manufacturing and distribution facilities • Kept 80 percent of existing phones on new network, reducing overall cost • Accomplished upgrade with zero downtime

Situation

For Bare Feet was founded more than two decades ago by Sharon Rivenbark. At the time, Sharon was a fifth-grade school teacher who started the sock manufacturing company by borrowing \$1,200 to purchase a single antique manual knitting machine. The company now produces thousands of sock designs and is Brown County, Indiana’s second largest employer.

“We are now on For Bare Feet Version 3.0 as far as a business model – from entrepreneurial start-up to regional manufacturer and now to a global sporting goods manufacturer and distributor,” said Rivenbark, now the company’s CEO. The company eventually grew to more than 140 employees and opened an international sales office in London, England.

Rivenbark and For Bare Feet President Mandy Zellmer realized that the company’s antiquated telecom network – originally installed in the late 1990s– was no longer able to support the company’s growing global

communication and collaboration requirements. “Nothing was broken, and we were focused on investing in other areas of our business in order to grow,” said Rivenbark.

“We realized that in order to effectively collaborate with our customers and suppliers, we had to upgrade our communications network,” said Zellmer. “The network that we were relying on was about five generations behind existing communications networks, and we were concerned that bridging such a significant technology gap was going to be an expensive proposition.”

For Bare Feet was not a stranger when it came to staying competitive through technology. The company had moved from Rivenbark’s single original manual knitting machine to using digital programming for textile manufacturing for markets around the globe. It was now seeking to upgrade to a world-class communications network as well.

Solution

For Bare Feet had worked with Matrix Integration since the late 1990s, installing Cisco Call Manager and becoming an early adopter of IP telephony. Rivenbark and Zellmer knew they wanted to stay with Cisco equipment because Cisco is the industry leader in communications networks and collaboration infrastructure. They also knew that the Matrix Integration team – led by Tom Presley, Matrix Integration’s IPT Practice Manager who had worked with For Bare Feet since the late 1990s – would be able to make the migration as seamless as possible.

Business Results

The Matrix Integration team led by Presley and Account Manager Steve Hauser was able to get For Bare Feet a promotional deal on the upgrade from Cisco. It then held meetings with the executive and marketing teams to find the gaps in the network and determine the direction that For Bare Feet wanted to take. Matrix Integration also teamed with RISC Networks to do a

technical assessment of For Bare Feet's existing network environment in order to develop a prioritized plan to upgrade Cisco Call Manager from version 3.3 to version 8.0 – all without upsetting the company's manufacturing schedule.

The network rollover to the new Call Manager 8.0 version was completed in a phased approach during May and June, 2011. The upgrade included a complete network refresh for For Bare Feet, with Matrix Integration installing Cisco Catalyst Switches for advanced Quality of Service (QoS) and a richer PoE (Power over Ethernet) environment. This allowed connectivity to Ethernet-powered devices, including Cisco IP phones, wireless access points and even video devices. Matrix Integration also installed Cisco's G2 ISR 2900 Routers to enable the network to run remotely for better business continuity.

For Bare Feet not only upgraded its network infrastructure to deliver high-end voice solutions, but Matrix Integration also installed 8.0's advanced communications management and voicemail systems through a virtualized network. This gave For Bare Feet the ability to deploy a global mobile environment, enabling it to leverage single number dialing and collaboration capabilities such as four-digit dialing between the U.S. and London facilities, as well as teleworkers call control. And it provided the business continuity support that For Bare Feet needed in today's global market.

One of For Bare Feet's biggest concerns was the significant downtime – originally estimated to be as many as three to five days – that it thought it might have to endure during the upgrade. "Instead, using the phased approach recommended by Matrix Integration, we didn't have any downtime for either our manufacturing or distribution facilities," said Zellmer. "In addition, we were able to keep about 80 percent of the phones that we had, since Matrix Integration had long ago installed the 7940 series of phones, which are still a staple within the Cisco telecom environment."

During the analysis stage, Matrix Integration established baseline metrics on key performance indicators such as latency. "For Bare Feet's network was running at five to 10 percent latency within its own LAN (Local Area Network)," said Presley. "People complained that it caused jittering in the quality of the conversations. Since the upgrade, latency is now at zero."

"We thought upgrading to an advanced Cisco Unified Communications network would be prohibitively expensive – something only the larger companies could afford," Zellmer said. "We were very surprised and happy that Matrix Integration was able to get us large enterprise features at a price we could afford."

"Matrix Integration has been a trusted partner for a long time. As the business continued to grow around the globe, we realized that we needed to communicate and collaborate at a much higher level with our team members, customers and business partners. So we followed the advice of the Matrix Integration team to upgrade and virtualize our communications infrastructure network."

— Mandy Zellmer, President at For Bare Feet

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