



Company Taps Strengths of Microsoft Partners and Cuts Costs with Unified Communications

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—Software engineering

Customer Profile

RealPage, based in Carrollton, Texas, provides software products and services for property management firms. The company has more than 1,000 employees.

Business Situation

When RealPage found that replacing its outdated voice-mail system would cost it U.S.\$60,000, it decided to look for a more efficient solution that included e-mail, voice, and conferencing capabilities.

Solution

With help from The Via Group, RealPage deployed a unified communications solution based on Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007, GN Jabra headsets and phones.

Benefits

- More efficient communications
- Expected U.S.\$5 million in combined cost savings and increased sales
- High user adoption and scalability
- Accelerated deployment
- Minimized risks

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Joe McCorkle, Director of Information Technology, RealPage

RealPage, a Texas-based software vendor that offers products for multifamily property management, serves more than 20,000 customers. When RealPage discovered it would cost more than \$U.S. 60,000 to replace its aging voice mail system, it sought a more comprehensive communications solution that included e-mail, voice, and conferencing. Working with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner The Via Group, RealPage deployed a solution based on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, along with optimized Jabra headsets from GN Netcom. As a result, RealPage gained an efficient unified communications solution that is expected to deliver \$5 million in cost savings and increased sales in 2009. And, by deploying a joint solution from Microsoft partners, RealPage significantly accelerated the deployment and minimized the risks of adopting a new communications solution.



Situation

RealPage provides software-as-a service solutions for the multifamily property management industry. Its customers range from small firms that manage only one or two buildings to corporations that own and operate hundreds of properties.

RealPage provides five on-demand solutions for its customers: (1) OneSite property management systems for automating the process of leasing, renting, and managing apartments; (2) CrossFire sales and marketing systems for boosting occupancy and retention; (3) YieldStar asset optimization systems for managing asset valuation and investment return; (4) Velocity utility and billing services for accelerating payments for resident charges; and (5) LeasingDesk systems, for streamlining the leasing process.

The company has more than 1,000 employees, mostly at its Texas headquarters, but also at its branch offices in the United States and a software development office in India. Employees frequently need to communicate on software development, customer issues, and account management.

In 2007, the RealPage IT department began to consider replacing its aging voice-mail system. But it faced a critical issue: "Replacing the old voice-mail system from our existing vendor was going to cost about \$60,000 for purchasing and support," says Joe McCorkle, Director of Information Technology for RealPage.

In addition, the company sought more efficient communications that included integrated e-mail, as well as conferencing to address the growing costs associated with employee travel to sales and board meetings.

Solution

RealPage turned to The VIA Group, an IT consulting and engineering group and Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, to help it find a solution to its communications issues. The VIA Group has been involved in voice and data convergence since 1997, and it is familiar with both telephony and IT infrastructures.

The VIA Group maintains a close relationship with several other Microsoft partners, including Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, GN Netcom, a Danish manufacturer whose Jabra headsets are sold in 70 countries. David Carswell, Sr., President of The VIA Group, says, "We pair our experience with that of other partners to provide end-to-end solutions for our customers, so we can be a one-stop shop for them. It's a collaborative effort to serve customers better."

The VIA Group worked closely with RealPage to identify the company's needs and existing resources before deploying a unified communications solution based on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 and the Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 client. The software provides integrated presence awareness, so users can see in real time if contacts are available to communicate.

The VIA Group also deployed Exchange Server 2007 with Unified Messaging to give users the ability to listen to and retrieve voice-mail messages from their Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007 messaging and collaboration client, and to use their phones to manage their Office Outlook e-mail and calendars.

During the deployment, The VIA Group recommended plug-and-play Jabra USB headsets from GN Netcom, which are *Optimized for Office Communicator* to provide enhanced voice clarity, which is lacking in software-based phones.

RealPage tried six different models for a couple of weeks. "With the help of The VIA Group, we were able to select ones that were best for each specific role," says McCorkle.

For example, customer-service agents need to work from their desktop computers, so RealPage chose USB headsets for them. For other employees, such as _____, RealPage selected wireless headsets so they could work on projects as they talked on the phone. Others, such as _____ who need to work from the office and home chose the Jabra _____ headset. With a single headset, they can plug into the phone or into a computer by swapping a cable. Sales people who do a lot of talking on the phone, wanted the _____, so they can talk while completing paperwork and drive with a hands-free device.

In addition to the e-mail, and VoIP telephony, The VIA Group introduced RealPage to Microsoft RoundTable™ conferencing and collaboration devices, which include a 360-degree camera for videoconferencing and software that tracks the active speaker in real time. RealPage then subscribed to a monthly plan for Microsoft Office Live Meeting, so it could hold conferences over the Web.

The solution was deployed in phases beginning in early 2008. "The deployment has gone smoothly and we've been able to easily add users," says McCorkle.

Benefits

RealPage has gained significantly from its unified communications solution. With the help of The VIA Group and GN Netcom, it has achieved more efficient communications that has resulted in dramatic cost savings and an expectation of increased profits. The company projects its overall financial benefits will reach or exceed U.S.\$5 million in 2009.

RealPage accelerated its deployment and reduced the risks of implementing its new

solution by drawing on the strengths of the Microsoft partners. "The combination of the Microsoft technology and the partnership between The VIA Group and GN Netcom has reduced our costs and given us effective unified communications," says McCorkle.

More Efficient Communications

RealPage has significantly streamlined its communications.. "Because Office Communications Server 2007, Exchange Server 2007, and the related technologies are all integrated seamlessly, employees can communicate faster, so they get more done in less time," says McCorkle. "We can also communicate more effectively with clients." That's especially true with premier clients who test early versions of the company's products. "By using instant messaging, we can get rapid feedback and make adjustments to our products virtually in real time."

Presence awareness has especially contributed to efficiency. "We have all but eliminated needless calls and waiting for e-mail responses, because employees know when colleagues are available," says McCorkle.

In addition, sales people now get their sales commissions 30 percent faster, because Exchange Server 2007 with Unified Messaging pushes faxes directly to their inboxes, where sales people can review their sales figures and forward them to accounting at their convenience.

McCorkle notes that the IT department, which has 42 employees located in various buildings at the Texas headquarters, can now conduct their engineering discussions more efficiently, too. "With the Office Communicator 2007 client, it's very easy to initiate a conference call to bring multiple people in to address a specific question. And while that's going on, maybe someone on the

call is simultaneously having an instant messaging chat session on their PC—it's very easy to multitask," he says.

Multitasking has also improved considerably with the use of Jabra headsets.

The Microsoft technology has also reduced the number of e-mail messages. "With instant messaging—which the IT department employees now use for quick questions—my my e-mail is reduced by about 25 percent. And when I'm in my e-mail, I can use Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging to listen to voice mails without having to dial a phone," says McCorkle.

Dramatic Cost Savings

Travel costs for the economists and other employees have also declined significantly with the use of Microsoft RoundTable and Live Meeting. "The return on investment for Microsoft Roundtable is one trip," says McCorkle. "We used to take several employees on sales presentations, but now most can participate by Web conferencing."

Costs for the quarterly company sales meetings and annual board meeting have also declined. Instead of bringing all sales people to headquarters, the monthly meetings now take place over the Web. And once, 20 people or more might travel to the annual board meeting. "This year, our CEO went to the board meeting by himself," says McCorkle. The company shipped a Microsoft RoundTable device to New York and held the meeting through a Web conference. "That saved us about \$14,000 in airfare alone," he says.

The Jabra headsets have also helped reduce costs with the elimination of [desk phones](#) for....

With its new communications solution, RealPage expects to save about \$3 million

annually in travel expenses and \$200,000 in customer support costs.

Projected Increase in Profits

RealPage plans to have Office Communications Server 2007 capabilities deployed to its entire sales force by the middle of 2009, which, in turn, should help to boost profits through increased efficiencies. By having more time to sell, Realpage expects its sales team to bring in an additional \$2.5 million in revenue in 2009.

High Adoption and Flexibility

McCorkle says the Microsoft unified communications solution has been so enthusiastically adopted at all levels of the company with both in-office personnel and with telecommuters. "We have some executives who travel a lot and some who have families that live quite a distance from our headquarters," McCorkle says. "They've become very enthusiastic adopters of this new technology. The Jabra headsets provide so much more flexibility that one of our top executives asked us to remove his old phone from his office."

RealPage believes the Jabra headsets were critical to user adoption. "Voice quality and comfort are essential to how readily a unified communications solution is adopted," says McCorkle. "And our employees find the Jabra headsets provide both of those qualities, so they are quite satisfied."

McCorkle adds, "Employees appreciate the mobility of their wireless headsets and how much more they can get done".

The flexibility of its unified communications solution based on Office Communications Server 2007 means that the company can easily add users and extend its solution further in the future. It has also led the company to look at new ways it can use the technology for its customers.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about The VIA Group products and services, call (800) 807-8854 or visit the Web site at: www.theVIAGroup.com

For more information about GN Netcom products and services, call (800) 826-4656, extension 6606 or visit the Web site at: www.jabra.com/microsoft

For more information about RealPage products and services, call (877) 325-7243 or visit the Web site at: www.realpage.com

Accelerated Deployment

By using The VIA Group, RealPage was able to deploy a joint solution far faster than it could on its own. "We have other strategic projects to work on, and having The VIA Group handle the deployment freed our IT staff for other work," says McCorkle. "It also meant we could quickly get up-to-speed, because their people had handled so many similar deployments in the past. And they saved us time, because we did not have to go out and research the entire market for headsets and complimentary technology. That expertise meant a lot."

Minimized Risks

The close relationship between The VIA Group and GN Netcom helped us considerably," says McCorkle. "We didn't know which headsets to buy, but because The VIA Group consultants know a lot of technologies, we knew we could trust their recommendations for the Jabra headsets. We did not have to take a chance on technologies that might not work."

Solid Foundation

RealPage believes it now has a solution that will serve it well both now and in the future. "We see the unified communications market as having a big future in our industry, and we

says. "By adding their own services and products, Microsoft partners extend the value of the Microsoft technology. We're excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for us and our customers through these strong partnerships."

Microsoft Office System

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think the Microsoft technology and its partners will play a central role," McCorkle

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007
 - Microsoft Office Communicator 2007
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

Hardware

- Jabra IP USB headsets
- Microsoft RoundTable devices

Partners

- The Via Group
- GN Netcom