

## Canadian Retailer Improves Customer Service with Reliable Communications

Mac Station replaces outdated IP phone system with help from Boardwalk Communications

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### MAC STATION

- Industry: Apple computer retailer
- Headquartered in Abbotsford, Burnaby, and Vancouver, British Columbia
- Approximately 40 employees

#### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- More reliable communication platform
- Access to ongoing vendor support when needed
- Easy-to-manage platform for future communication requirements

#### BUSINESS SOLUTION

- Replace legacy phone system with Cisco Unified Communications
- Implementation expertise from Boardwalk Communications

#### BUSINESS RESULTS

- Lower overall phone costs and receive superior call quality
- Improved customer service and information exchange
- Use of advanced new features with plans to implement more
- Quick access to vendor support, partner expertise

### Business Challenge

Mac Station has come a long way since its inception 15 years ago. In the beginning it operated as a single retail store in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada, specializing in Apple computers. Today Mac Station has three retail locations (Abbotsford, Burnaby, and Vancouver), 40 employees, and a growing consumer and business customer base. Mac Station's administration centre is located in Maple Ridge.

The company provides on-site service for single workstation repairs and networks involving multiple machines. Mac Station also offers items for rent, everything from MacBooks to peripherals such as DVD burners and digital cameras, and even non-functioning Apple products as props for movies and TV shows. The firm has garnered four consecutive Consumers' Choice Awards for Best Corporate Computer Reseller in Vancouver.

Mac Station aims to provide superior customer service, and communication is the key to impressing the ever-growing client base. But the company's existing telephone system was getting in the way. Based on an open-source IP phone platform, it crashed often, cutting off callers in the middle of conversations. Sound quality on the basic phones was poor, and too often employees

would miss calls from important customers, potentially affecting the company's revenue.

"The system would repeatedly corrupt users' voice mailboxes," says Aaron Attwaters, Mac Station's regional service administrator and the firm's IT infrastructure manager. He often worked late into the night resetting the server, applying software patches, and praying for system stability. "When you have problems like this, you don't have many solutions."

Mac Station sought a new communication platform that would not only do away with the instability and support issues, but also pave the way for improved connectivity through advanced features such as single-number reach, remote unified messaging access, and contact centre functionality.

### Business Solution

Based on a strong reference, Mac Station chose to work with Cisco Premier Certified Partner Boardwalk Communications, specializing in Cisco® implementations. Together, Boardwalk and Mac Station installed a Cisco Unified Communications solution including voice, data, and messaging capabilities. The solution incorporated Cisco Unified

Communications Manager Business Edition for call routing; Cisco Unified Presence software for presence capabilities; Cisco Unity® Connection for unified voicemail and email; Cisco Catalyst® switches and gateways to connect the branch and main office locations; and Cisco Unified IP phones. This robust, feature-rich communication platform was designed to meet the retailer's requirements now and provide the framework for even more advanced functionality in the future.

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– Aaron Attwaters, Regional Services Administrator, Mac Station

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“Mac Station is a technology company itself and very capable. We weren’t surprised that Mac Station wanted to be involved with the deployment in order to gain a better understanding of the Cisco system,” says Kelly Irvin, senior account manager, Boardwalk. “We trained them on how to deploy the handsets, and provided some of the configuration aspects of the gateways, then we focused on network design and analysis to help ensure the system performed optimally.”

## Results

Mac Station’s communication platform is now stable, so the company is not wasting time and money troubleshooting connectivity issues. That spells lower overall costs and fewer late nights for Attwaters. “I’ve actually been into the new system only three times in the last three months,” he says. “I don’t have to go in on a regular basis and run maintenance.”

Calls no longer disappear mid-conversation, so customers and colleagues stay connected, facilitating revenue and information sharing. And because this is a centralized platform, employees can log into any phone on the Mac Station network. Whether they’re at a desk or on the sales floor, staff members can essentially transform nearby phones into their own extensions on the Mac Station network, allowing them to access messages, take client calls, or connect with each other, further enhancing communication across the business.

Whereas the previous platform would drop calls or fail to connect, the Cisco Unified Communications solution simplifies connectivity. Employees often use the call park feature in conjunction with instant messaging: a sales representative might receive a call meant for another employee, park the call, and send an instant message to the other sales rep, indicating that the call is waiting. Once the message is received, the other employee picks up the call and carries on with serving the customer’s needs.

What’s more, unlike the old system, employees can access all of their voicemail messages. There are no more corrupted mailboxes, and the sound quality of the Cisco Unified IP phones is superior to that of the basic handsets that Mac Station used to have. “After being limited to SIP, I’m really impressed by the Skinny Call Control Protocol (SCCP) in the Cisco equipment,” Attwaters says. “It also supports a number of features we aren’t even using yet, but we’re a growing company, and it’s good to know our communication system will grow with us.”

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Mac Station also no longer faces long waits for support, which means the company can focus more on customer care than communication concerns. “We know Boardwalk is there to help us implement new features as we go forward,” Attwaters says. “We’re not at the mercy of obscure technology and scarce IT resources.”

PRODUCT LIST	
<b>Routing and Switching</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisco Catalyst 2960 Switches</li> <li>• Cisco 1861 Integrated Services Router</li> <li>• Cisco 2801 Integrated Services Router</li> </ul>
<b>Cisco Unified Communications</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisco Unified Communications Manager Business Edition, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Cisco Unified Communications Manager</li> <li>◦ Cisco Unity Connection Unified Messaging</li> <li>◦ Cisco Unified Mobility</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cisco Unified Contact Center Express</li> <li>• Cisco Unified Presence</li> <li>• Cisco Unified IP Phones</li> </ul>

### Next Steps

Mac Station expects its mobile sales representatives to benefit from Cisco Unified Mobility’s single-number reach feature and the unified voicemail and email messaging features of Cisco Unity Connection in the near future, for quick responses to questions from clients and colleagues. Soon the company plans to begin incorporating the Cisco WebEx™ online meeting and web conferencing service for employee training and customer-focused webcasts. Further into the future, the Cisco Unified Communications platform will support contact centre functionality with Cisco Unified Contact Center Express, including the hunt group feature to distribute customer calls across the enterprise for swift responses to clients.

“We’ve been in business for 15 years, but sometimes it feels just like day one, and we’re just a new and nimble operation,” Attwaters says. “We know we have a lot more growing to do. It’s important for our technology to be able to support us. With Cisco Unified Communications, we have the technology that we need.”

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications, go to <http://cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications>

To find out more about Boardwalk Communications’ services, go to <http://www.bdwalk.biz>



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