

Waitrose enables Partners to deliver more responsive customer service with IP telephony



Customer challenge

To ensure customers continued to receive the highest standard of service on the shop floor, Waitrose wanted to free up branch-based Partners from spending time on the phone in the back office. To support its Future Branch Structures project and reduce call costs, it needed a telephony system that was standardised across all its branches.

Computacenter solution

Waitrose partnered with Computacenter to deploy a Cisco IP telephony solution that included cordless handsets and a wireless network infrastructure. The IT services and solutions provider conducted surveys, upgraded access points and deployed handsets. It is now responsible for supporting the IP telephony system from the Computacenter Global Service Desk.

Results

Waitrose will be able to significantly reduce telecommunications costs while also enhancing collaboration between branches and head office. With a more flexible and mobile telephony system, Partners are able to spend more time on the shop floor helping customers.

Services

- Unified Communications
- Borderless Networks

Technology

- Cisco IP Telephony
- Cisco Wireless Networking
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager

Customer Agenda

- Cost Reduction
- Continuous Improvement/Innovation

Customer profile:

The Waitrose Way

Waitrose has more than 300 supermarkets throughout the UK that are focused on providing fresh, quality food to its customers.

The company has a strong ethical standpoint, known as the Waitrose Way, which is founded on forming long-term relationships with farmers and suppliers. The Waitrose Way supports the retailer's commitment to championing British produce, responsible sourcing, treating people fairly and treading lightly on the environment.

As part of the John Lewis Partnership, everyone who works at Waitrose owns Waitrose, with a say in how the organisation is run and a share in its success.

“The new IP telephony system has enabled our Partners to spend more time helping customers.”

Ben Hart,
Project Manager, Waitrose

Business challenge:

Enabling responsive customer service on the shop floor

To provide the highest levels of customer service, Waitrose needs to ensure as many Partners as possible are available on the shop floor, rather than managing telephone calls in the back office.

Achieving this goal is one of the areas of focus of the retailer's Future Branch Structures Reorganisation Project, which has brought greater consistency to the sections and structures across the Waitrose branch estate.

Ben Hart, Project Manager at Waitrose, comments: “To support the Future Branch Structures Project, we needed a telephony system that would enable Partners in our branches to be more flexible and mobile.”

Historically, Waitrose had a diverse and disparate range of telephony systems, with each branch equipped with different technologies and different capabilities. “Calls between branches and to and from the head office were often made via traditional external lines, resulting in high call costs,” adds Ben.

Computacenter solution:

Standardised IP telephony across Waitrose stores

Waitrose started working with Computacenter in February 2013 following a series of workshops to agree the project scope and approach. “We knew Computacenter had both the experience and resources to help with a project of this scale,” explains Ben.

Computacenter project managed and executed the on-site implementation for 216 stores, including initial surveys, integration, testing and cut-over to the new Cisco IP (Internet Protocol) telephony system.

“The Computacenter team worked closely with the branches to explain the business impact, ensure phones were installed in the right places and create relevant documentation,” adds Ben.

As part of the project, Computacenter also upgraded network access points to support voice capabilities and replaced ageing and unsupported routers before configuring and installing the new handsets, which includes cordless devices for the shop floor as well as fixed phones in offices.

Computacenter also enhanced the existing Cisco wireless network to support the roaming devices. This involved conducting wireless surveys to ensure adequate coverage and installing new wireless access points where necessary.

Expert resources and repeatable processes

Thanks to Computacenter's expertise in IP telephony, its engineers were able to trouble-shoot issues as they arose throughout the deployment process. For example, when it discovered that microwaves in some branches were causing interference, the team conducted a root cause analysis exercise and was able to go to Waitrose with a suggested solution, rather than a problem.

"With dedicated project resources and a 'mop-up' team responsible for dealing with minor post-implementation issues, Computacenter was able to resolve problems without delaying the implementation schedule or putting a strain on our internal telephony team," explains Ben.

Weekly risks and issues meetings and Computacenter's proven project management methodology, Tempo, also helped keep the project on track. "We had a completely transparent and collaborative approach with Computacenter, where issues were discussed fairly and openly with no finger-pointing," adds Ben.

With up to six stores going live each week, Computacenter completed the rollout in August 2014. "Despite its scale and complexity, the project was completed on time and to budget," comments Ben. "Regardless of the issues the team encountered, Computacenter always ensured that the branch had a fully working telephony system the following day."

24x7 service desk support

Computacenter was also responsible for fulfilling change requests from branches throughout the project, including partner moves and additional handset installations. The IT services and solutions provider is now providing second and third line support for the IP system from its Global Service Desk.

"Computacenter provides a 24x7 support service, which is vital as many of our stores have long opening hours," explains Ben. "The Computacenter service desk deals with any third party escalations and handles issues through to resolution in line with stringent service level agreements."

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Project Manager, Waitrose

Results:

Better communication at a lower cost

Waitrose now has a standardised IP telephony system across all branches to match its head office. "The new system enhances communication between branches and with the rest of the John Lewis Partnership, as we now have a centralised directory and internal calls are free," says Ben. "The solution is also integrated with our store public address system, so store-wide announcements can be made from any handset."

The advanced telephony system has also enabled Waitrose to:

Improve Partner productivity: Branch-based Partners are no longer tied to an office to answer the phone as they can take calls on the shop floor, enabling them to be more mobile and more responsive to customer needs.

Enhance customer service: All stores now have interactive voice response (IVR), so calls are routed directly to a partner that can help with the customer's query. For example, ecommerce queries are now routed via IVR directly to the ecommerce section. Automated responses to standard queries, such as store opening times, also free up Partner time.

Reduce costs: With the volume of chargeable calls expected to halve, Waitrose will see a significant reduction in telecommunication costs. The new IP system will also be more cost-effective to maintain, decreasing the retailer's operational expenditure.

Thanks to the project, Waitrose now has the telecommunications foundations it needs to support its Future Branch Structures Project. As Ben comments: "The new IP telephony system has enabled our Partners to spend more time helping customers. As new features are released, we will be able to continue to improve communications for our Partners and the overall retail experience for our customers."