

Automotive Repair Shop Increases Productivity and Improves Customer Service

Seyfer Automotive, Inc. made its nine employees more productive with the Cisco Smart Business Communications System.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>SEYFER AUTOMOTIVE, INC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive Repair • Wheat Ridge, Colorado • 9 employees <p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase revenue by improving productivity for technicians and service and sales staff • Enhance customer service and responsiveness • Reduce costs and simplify administration of voice and network equipment
<p>NETWORKING SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed a Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business appliance • Extended voice and data access to any area in the building
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freed up 30 minutes daily for the service manager, resulting in one or two additional daily repair jobs worth US\$200 to \$US400 • Made it easier for customers to reach the right person, on the first try • Reduced number of network devices to maintain from four to one

Business Challenge

In the automotive repair business, success requires highly productive service personnel as well as excellent customer service. A family-managed business with nine employees, Seyfer Automotive, Inc., of Wheat Ridge, Colorado, provides diagnosis, maintenance, and auto repair services, as well as restoration of collector cars and performance cars. Many of the company’s customers are busy professionals who drop off and pick up their cars after normal business hours. “It is not unusual for our only contact with customers to be by phone, so the flexibility of the voice system is very important,” says Donny Seyfer, operations manager.

The company wanted a new, unified communications system that would make it easier for customers to reach the right employee, the first time, and for employees to respond quickly to messages from customers and suppliers. With the

previous phone system, all of the company’s phones rang whenever a customer called. That meant that high-value employees, such as the service manager and operations manager, spent a lot of time answering calls intended for other people. “Every minute that the service manager is not talking to a customer or a technician is unproductive time,” says Seyfer. What is more, the company had just one shared voicemail box, so the company’s owner had to listen to messages every hour and then leave notes on employees’ desks. An employee who was away from the desk might not receive a customer’s or supplier’s message for a couple of hours.

Seyfer Automotive also wanted to improve productivity. The less time that technicians and the service manager spent walking back and forth to the office to make phone calls or retrieve information from the Internet, the more repair jobs the company could complete in a day. “We wanted employees to be able to make and receive phone calls and access the Internet wirelessly from any workspace, including the parts room or even beside a car on the shop floor,” says Seyfer. Although Seyfer Automotive already had a wireless network, employees rarely used it because it was not secure. That meant that the company’s residential neighbors could access the network, which clogged up the bandwidth and resulted in unreliable performance. Therefore, when

technicians needed to view a wiring diagram, they had to leave the car, walk to the office, print out the diagram, and bring it back, consuming time and paper.

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—Donny Seyfer, Operations Manager, Seyfer Automotive, Inc.

Network Solution

Seyfer Automotive met all of its voice, Internet, mobility, and security needs with a single solution, the Cisco® Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business. The solution was deployed by Lewan and Associates, a Cisco Gold Partner that managed the company’s previous data network. “The Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business is an excellent choice for a small company like Seyfer Automotive because it is an all-in-one solution that is easy to administer,” says Bobby Harness, systems engineer, Lewan and Associates. “It also saves money by eliminating the costs of a separate voice system, network switch, wireless access point, and firewall.” The base communications appliance accommodates up to eight phones plus four additional fax machines or other analog devices, and Lewan and Associates added a Cisco Catalyst® Express Switch so that Seyfer Automotive can connect up to 16 phones and PCs as it grows.

Seyfer Automotive set up its voice system so that callers hear an automated greeting and are then prompted to enter a number for the service department or the particular employee they want to reach. The call is then sent directly to the employee’s phone, and if the employee does not answer, to the employee’s personal voicemail box. A message waiting-indicator light on the Cisco Unified IP Phones alerts employees that they have a message, helping them be responsive without having to constantly check for messages. Calls for service appointments ring every phone so that any available employee can take the call, avoiding the loss of business that might result if a customer does not reach an employee and decides to call another repair shop.

The Cisco solution for small business also includes a built-in, secure wireless access point. Now employees can work productively from any workspace in the building—including the parts department or a car bay—just as if they were at their offices. Several employees have a Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7921G with a color screen, which is set up to ring at the same time as their office phone. Making employees easier to reach improves customer service and reduces the number of voicemails awaiting mobile employees when they return to their desks. Lewan and Associates set up the wireless network to provide secure guest access, as well, so that customers who are given a password can work or browse the Web while they wait for their cars to be serviced.

Business Results

Improved Employee Productivity

Seyfer says that the biggest benefit of the Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business is improved employee productivity. “The more time we save, the more customers we can serve,” he says. “Our service manager now has 30 minutes extra each day to spend with customers because he no longer needs to answer calls intended for other employees.”

Extended Workspace, in any Location

Employees can now work productively in any workspace in the facility instead of only at their desks. “Using our Cisco Unified Wireless IP phones, the service manager and I can talk to a parts department employee while we are looking at the car,” says Seyfer. “The ability to treat the car bay as our workspace saves time because we can immediately answer any questions that the parts manager might have instead of putting down the phone, running to go look at the car, and then running back.”

Seyfer estimates that the secure wireless access saves 30 minutes daily for the company’s service manager. “In our business, we trade our time for dollars,” he says. “By saving 30 minutes a day for our service manager, our Cisco solution increases our daily sales potential by US\$200 to US\$400.”

Improved Customer Service

“Customers have commented that they like the new voice setup because they can reach the right person, on the first try,” says Seyfer. Employees who have a Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7921G can receive calls from any location in the building. In addition, employees can respond to voice messages more quickly because they can check their personal voicemail box instead of waiting for the owner to periodically check a shared company voicemail box and give them their messages.

Donny Seyfer, who travels frequently, appreciates being able to easily change his voicemail message, a feature that he says is hard to find on systems that are affordable for small businesses. “I change my message to let callers know how soon they can receive a return call,” he says.

The Cisco small business system sometimes even reduces customer costs. “Wireless car-side diagnostic and information systems can shorten the diagnostic process, saving time for us and money for our customers,” says Seyfer.

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Next Steps

Seyfer Automotive has more plans to use its Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business solution to improve service and reduce costs. The service manager intends to use the Cisco wireless network to write repair orders from any location in the shop, using a personal digital assistant with a version of the store’s shop management system. He will be able to scan parts to input them directly into the repair order, saving time and avoiding errors. The company also plans to use the built-in Virtual Private Network (VPN) feature of the Cisco solution so that employees can securely access the network from home or while out of town, extending the workspace to their home or hotel.

The small company’s Cisco network supports video as well as voice and data, and Donny Seyfer is planning to use videoconferencing to collaborate with the co-host of his local radio talk show. “Instead of driving more than a half hour to show each other the parts that we want to discuss on our upcoming show, we can make video telephony calls from our homes or offices,” he says.

Seyfer concludes, “The Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business helps each of our nine employees work more productively. Nobody holds up work because they have to spend time answering other people’s phone calls or walking back and forth to different areas of the shop to use the phone or Internet.”

PRODUCT LIST

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst Express 520 Series Switch

Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business appliance, which includes:
 - Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express
 - Cisco Unity Express
 - Integrated LAN switching capability
 - Integrated wireless LAN access point
 - Secure Cisco IOS Firewall
 - Encryption and Virtual Private Network (VPN) capability
 - Cisco Configuration Assistant
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7960G
- Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phones 7921G



Americas Headquarters
 Cisco Systems, Inc.
 170 West Tasman Drive
 San Jose, CA 95134-1706
 USA
www.cisco.com
 Tel: 408 526-4000
 800 553-NETS (6387)
 Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
 Cisco Systems, Inc.
 168 Robinson Road
 #28-01 Capital Tower
 Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
 Tel: +65 6317 7777
 Fax: +65 6317 7799

Europe Headquarters
 Cisco Systems International BV
 Haarlerbergpark
 Haarlerbergweg 13-19
 1101 CH Amsterdam
 The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
 Tel: +31 0 800 020 0791
 Fax: +31 0 20 357 1100

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