



Tool Manufacturer Uses Communications Solution to Increase Efficiency, Reduce Costs

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Manufacturing

Customer Profile

Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation is an industry-leading manufacturer and marketer of heavy-duty, portable electric power tools, hand tools, and accessories for professional users worldwide.

Business Situation

Milwaukee wanted to replace its IBM Lotus Notes messaging system with a unified communications and collaboration solution that included enterprise voice to help increase efficiency across the business.

Solution

Milwaukee deployed Microsoft Lync Server 2010 as part of its unified communications solution. With the help of Microsoft partner AltiGen, it also integrated call center solutions with Lync Server to improve customer service.

Benefits

- Fund new solution with \$3 million savings
- Increase call center efficiency
- Improve customer service
- Ease management
- Enable collaboration across the

"By implementing Lync Server, we expect to recover \$3 million over five years, which will pay for our move to Lync and cover the cost of our new call center and CRM solutions. That's a cost the business will not have to absorb."

Craig Mueller, Senior Manager of Infrastructure, Milwaukee Electric Tool

Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation is an industry-leading manufacturer and marketer of heavy-duty, portable electric power tools, hand tools, and accessories for professional users worldwide. The company is an innovator in the tool industry, and wanted its technology solutions to help foster that innovation. Milwaukee Tool decided to replace its IBM Lotus Notes solution with a Microsoft Unified Communications platform that included Microsoft Lync Server 2010. Working with Microsoft Certified Partner AltiGen, the company also deployed innovative call center solutions based on Lync Server technologies. While adding features such as presence, instant messaging, desktop sharing, enterprise voice, and custom call center solutions, Milwaukee still expects to reduce costs by US\$3 million over the next five years, in addition to improving efficiency and customer service.



Situation

Since its founding in 1924, Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation has focused on a single vision: to produce the best heavy-duty electric power tools and accessories available to the professional user. The company continues to set industry standards, targeting professional tool users of all types with a product line that includes more than 500 tools and over 3,500 accessories. It remains committed to quality, using state-of-the-art technologies and sophisticated manufacturing techniques.

Milwaukee employs about 1,000 people globally and is a subsidiary of Techtronic Industries (TTI), a leading marketer, manufacturer, and supplier of home improvement and floor care products. With headquarters in Brookfield, Wisconsin, it has 18 branches spread across the United States, in addition to two manufacturing plants and a call and distribution center in Mississippi.

Rebuilding from the Ground Up

Milwaukee has arranged its manufacturing operations into cells consisting of motivated and empowered teams to help employees focus on customer needs, respond quickly to market demands, and increase productivity and product quality.

Although the company is innovative in terms of manufacturing and products, its IT environment left something to be desired. In fact, the IT department was seen primarily by many of the executives as a cost center, which is why the company brought in Craig Mueller, Senior Manager of Infrastructure at Milwaukee, to transform both the department and the technology. Mueller says, "As I assessed the infrastructure, I quickly realized that we needed to build a strong foundation, starting with our back-end network. From a

collaboration perspective, we were the only business inside TTI not using Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft Outlook, so it was difficult for our businesses to communicate with each other."

Mueller knew he wanted an end-to-end infrastructure that was based on Microsoft products for business productivity, communications, and collaboration. This change was only possible with top-down executive support and the ability to build a strong, passionate, and intelligent team of IT professionals. Milwaukee migrated servers and desktops from Windows XP to Windows 2008 and upgraded from Microsoft Office 2007 to Microsoft Office 2010. Next, the company began its migration from IBM Lotus Notes to Microsoft Exchange Server 2010. It also began to migrate applications from IBM Lotus Domino to Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010.

Calling for New Communications and Collaboration Solutions

Another area where Mueller believed IT could improve service to the business was in the areas of communications and collaboration. In addition to a new messaging platform, the company deployed an online, hosted version of Microsoft Office Communications Server for key people on the IT and executive teams to expose them to capabilities such as presence and instant messaging.

For telephony, the company relied on an aging Siemens private-branch exchange (PBX) system that sat on the manufacturing floor in Olive Branch, Mississippi, right next to the main water supply. It had even been hit by lightning. "We knew we needed to make some pretty quick changes to our voice solution in a short amount of time," says Mueller. Milwaukee decided to

"With MaxACD for Lync, we can provide first-class management for the call center because supervisors have access to the information they need to make decisions, and within IT, we can ensure that services are working the way they should."

Craig Mueller, Senior Manager of Infrastructure, Milwaukee Electric Tool

transition to a voice over IP (VoIP) solution to replace its legacy PBX system.

Providing Better Call Center Solutions

Milwaukee was also interested in using capabilities such as instant messaging and desktop sharing to help improve its call center and customer service operations. "Our call centers take calls from two main groups: distributors and general end users such as plumbers and electricians who use our tools," says Mueller. Call center staff had no quick way to find subject matter experts who could answer questions. The staff also had no way to access a customer's call history for more effective issue resolution.

In addition to providing better customer service over the phone, Milwaukee wanted a better way to route and manage calls. Rather than have calls routed to a specific call center, the company wanted a system that would route a call to any available call center worker, regardless of location. It also wanted a better interactive voice response (IVR) system that would help customers decide whether they needed to speak to an agent or whether their issue could be resolved by visiting the company's website. Finally, Milwaukee wanted a way to monitor calls in real time to provide reports for things such as call times, hold times, agent statistics, and call abandon rates so that management could make better decisions about staffing and processes.

Solution

As a result of the success Milwaukee experienced with its pilot of Office Communications Server Online, it decided to deploy an on-premises proof of concept for Microsoft Lync Server 2010, the latest generation of communications and collaboration technologies from Microsoft, at its headquarters in Brookfield. Working with Project Leadership Associates (PLA), a

member of the Microsoft Partner Network, the company deployed Lync Server to test the core functionality of presence, instant messaging, and peer-to-peer audio and video conferencing. It quickly decided to move forward with a full on-premises deployment of Lync Server that would include replacing its Siemens PBX with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 Enterprise Voice. After deploying Lync Server 2010, Milwaukee worked with AltiGen, also a member of the Microsoft Partner Network, to deploy its MaxACD for Lync call center solution, a software-based auto attendant and automatic call distribution (ACD) system that integrates fully with Microsoft Lync 2010 on the desktop.

Creating a Solution for Business Continuity

PLA helped Milwaukee deploy Lync Server in a virtualized environment, which decreases the footprint and makes it easier to perform maintenance without interruption. Its deployment includes a front-end server and a back-end Microsoft SQL farm running a physical cluster. It also deployed a Monitoring server, which collects usage information; numerical data describing the media quality on the network and endpoints; and call error and troubleshooting information for failed calls. To implement business continuity initiatives the company is building a backup data center where it will deploy the same Lync Server configuration to provide disaster recovery and ensure business continuity.

With Lync, the IT team can use capabilities such as the Windows PowerShell command-line interface to easily deploy and manage Lync Server. They can also use the web-based control panel to manage Lync Server from anywhere on the corporate network. By using desktop sharing, the IT team can troubleshoot and walk employees through any issues they

"Call center supervisors found MaxACD for Lync intuitive and easy to learn. IT is also happy because it didn't want a solution that required outside support. Since they installed and configured it, they haven't had to do much with it."

Mike Plumer, Vice President of Sales,
AltiGen

are having with their applications or computers.

Deploying an Enterprise Telephony Solution

To provide VoIP capabilities, Milwaukee used a gateway to connect Lync to the public-switched telephone network (PSTN). In addition to retiring its Siemens PBX at its headquarters, Milwaukee plans to retire PBX systems at its branch offices by the end of 2012. To enable voice connections at its larger branch offices and call centers, the company is using AudioCodes Mediant Survivable Branch Appliances (SBAs). The SBA is based on cost-effective AudioCodes media gateways hosting the Microsoft Survivable Branch Appliance software package and provides network access and a PSTN connection, which maintains communication capabilities in the event of a wide area network (WAN) failure.

The company is using Polycom CX600 IP phones in conference rooms, warehouses, and general areas, and it has provided Plantronics Voyager PRO headsets for employees to use to place voice calls directly through Microsoft Lync 2010 on the desktop.

Working with a Trusted Partner to Revamp Call Centers

At its call center in Olive Branch, Mississippi, the company deployed the Lync client to help call center agents to familiarize themselves with the instant messaging, presence, and conferencing capabilities. After that, the company brought in AltiGen to do a proof of concept of its call center product, MaxACD for Lync, a Lync ISV Qualified Call Center application. "AltiGen was very flexible in working with us to determine what we wanted for our call center solution," explains Mueller. "We were happy to find a true partner that understood our business goals and could

help us take the technology to the next level."

With MaxACD for Lync, Milwaukee can use Skills Based Routing to route calls based on the expertise of call center agents. In addition, Skills Based Routing will also route calls based on presence, so if an agent's presence shows as away or busy, the system will automatically route the call to another agent. In the future, Milwaukee will route calls based on call data such as customer identification numbers or purchase order numbers, so that customers are routed to the correct agent for service and do not have to be transferred. "We evaluated all of the available contact center options for Microsoft Lync," says Mueller. "AltiGen's MaxACD software stood out as being intuitive, manageable, and very cost-effective. We liked that applications such as ACD reporting and call recording management were already built in."

In addition, AltiGen helped Milwaukee prove out a concept, which would display information about callers to agents in a pop-up screen. Agents could see a customer's identity, order history, and call history on the screen from the beginning of the call, so they can provide the correct service immediately. Supervisors found the wizard-based software easy to configure and manage.

For reporting, Milwaukee is using a feature of MaxACD called MaxReports, a web-based reporting application that can generate up to 40 predefined reports, designed to provide both detail and summary views of agent and workgroup performance. The company also worked with AltiGen to create custom reports. "With these reports, management can see how our customer service agents are performing and what we can do to improve," says Mueller. "From an IT

perspective, we can see if problems exist with the routing or any of the other call functions, so we can address those issues immediately.”

Planning for the Future

Milwaukee has partnered with the other TTI companies to deploy Lync across the enterprise, and based on the success Milwaukee experienced, even more adoption is occurring. Milwaukee plans to move forward with implementing its Microsoft Unified Communications solution by doing a proof of concept for Microsoft Exchange Unified Messaging, which consolidates voice mail and email into one inbox. It also plans to deploy a Federation server so that it can communicate easily through Lync with trusted partners, distributors, and vendors.

For its sales organization, Milwaukee will implement a new customer relationship management (CRM) solution, which it plans to integrate with Lync Server and MaxACD. “We want the sales teams and the customer service agents to have access to the same data, so agents understand how a sales person has been working with the customer and can more effectively provide service,” says Mueller.

The company will continue to roll out Lync Enterprise Voice at its branch offices, and it plans to have all 1,000 employees migrated to the new solution by the middle of 2012. Milwaukee will replace its AT&T conferencing solution with Lync Server, and it will also implement Lync E911 service for Enterprise Voice users.

Benefits

By implementing Lync Server with Enterprise Voice and MaxACD for Lync in addition to other Microsoft platform solutions, Milwaukee has provided the latest generation capabilities available to

ensure productivity and collaboration. More importantly, by implementing these solutions, Mueller has shown Milwaukee that IT can be much more than a cost center—it can be an innovative partner to help drive the business.

Fund New Solution with \$3 Million Savings

By moving to Lync Enterprise Voice as its primary voice solution, Milwaukee can eliminate maintenance costs for its PBX systems in addition to long distance and telephony costs for its AT&T services. Milwaukee will also retire its AT&T conferencing solution. “By implementing Lync Server, we expect to recover \$3 million over five years, which will pay for our move to Lync and cover the cost of our new call center and CRM solutions,” says Mueller. “That’s a cost the business will not have to absorb.”

Increase Call Center Efficiency

With MaxACD for Lync, Milwaukee can route calls to any available agent regardless of location. It can also route calls based on presence information. This means that Milwaukee can leverage all available service agents across the organization, instead of just at one call center.

More robust reporting through MaxACD also enables supervisors to make faster, better informed decisions about staffing and routing calls. “With our previous system, we had no insight into things such as hold times or abandon call rates,” says Mueller. “With MaxACD for Lync, we can provide first-class management for the call center because supervisors have access to the information they need to make decisions, and within IT, we can ensure that services are working the way they should.”

Improve Customer Satisfaction

Mueller expects customer satisfaction to increase because calls can be handled quickly by the right people. The future IVR system will enable customers to follow the best possible path—talking to an agent or visiting the Milwaukee website—to resolve an issue. When a customer does need to talk to an agent, Mueller believes the customer experience will be a good one. “Because we can route calls based on agent skills or customer type, customers can talk to the right person the first time,” says Mueller. “And with CRM and ERP, agents have the most up-to-date information about the customer right in front of them, instead of having to take time to look up call or order history.”

Ease Management

With an end-to-end Microsoft platform for unified communications, IT staff at Milwaukee has a common set of tools for managing messaging and communications. By using PowerShell, IT can easily automate tasks and implement changes to services. By implementing solutions such as Lync Server 2010 and Exchange Server 2010 that interoperate with each other, Milwaukee can also keep administrative costs down as it grows its Microsoft platform, because the staff has the skill set to administer multiple Microsoft solutions.

By deploying MaxACD for Lync, Milwaukee provided a robust call center solution that would not require a lot of overhead to manage. “Call center supervisors found MaxACD for Lync intuitive and easy to learn,” says Mike Plumer, Vice President of Sales at AltiGen. “IT is also happy because it didn’t want a solution that required outside support. Since they installed and configured it, they haven’t had to do much with it.”

By revamping the IT infrastructure at Milwaukee, Mueller believes that the company can move forward as a more productive, agile, collaborative organization that can stay focused on delivering the best innovative products while empowering our end users and 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 in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. 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 AltiGen Communications, Inc. products and services, call (888) 258-4436 or visit the website at:

www.altigen.com

For more information about Project Leadership Associates products and services, call (312) 441-0088 or visit the website at:

www.projectleadership.net

For more information about Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation products and services, call (800) 729-3878 or visit the website at:

www.milwaukeetool.com

Microsoft Lync Server 2010

Microsoft Lync Server 2010 ushers in a new connected user experience that transforms every communication into an interaction that is more collaborative, and engaging; and that is accessible from anywhere. For IT, the benefits are equally powerful, with a highly secure and reliable communications system that works with existing tools and systems for easier management, lower cost of ownership, smoother deployment and migration, and greater choice and flexibility.

For more information about Microsoft Lync Server 2010, go to:

www.microsoft.com/lync

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Lync 2010
 - Microsoft Outlook 2010
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Lync Server 2010
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
- AltiGen MaxACD for Lync

Hardware

- AudioCodes Mediant Survivable Branch Appliances

Partners

- AltiGen Communications Inc.
- Project Leadership Associates