

Consolidated Communications

Delivering the Industry's Lowest Total Cost of Ownership

"MIRAPOINT HAS PROVIDED CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS WITH A HIGHLY SCALABLE, FIVE-NINES RELIABLE MESSAGING SOLUTION THAT REQUIRES A FRACTION OF THE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES OF A TRADITIONAL MAIL SYSTEM, RESULTING IN LOW TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP?"

Rob Koester, senior manager of broadband product development, Consolidated Communications

CASE STUDY | SERVICE PROVIDER



BUSINESS NEED

Scalability, reliability, and low total cost of ownership

SOLUTION

Mirapoint Message Server

BOTTOM LINE

Mirapoint has delivered on scalability, reliability, simplified management, and low TCO for CCI, boosting profitability

Background

Founded in 1894, Consolidated Communications (NASDAQ: CNSL) is a family of companies providing advanced voice, data, and video services to both residential and business customers in Illinois and Texas. Headquartered in Mattoon, Illinois, Consolidated Communications is the 15th largest independent local telephone company in the nation. The company offers a wide range of services over its technologically-advanced network, including local and long distance, high-speed Internet access, digital television, private line, and carrier services. It also offers email services to its own Internet customers, Internet customers of other ISPs, and hosting customers who may or may not be Internet customers.

The Business Need

In 1997, CCI was purchased by a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC). But when that company filed for bankruptcy in 2002, it subsequently spun off CCI to private investors, including the great-grandson of the company's founder, on January 1, 2003. Between 1997 and 2003, Consolidated was essentially reselling services for the larger provider. "Once we were sold, we no longer had an Internet platform or an email system, so we had to build one from scratch," says Rob Koester, senior manager of broadband development at CCI. "Our key requirements were scalability, reliability, security, and low total cost of ownership."



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The Mirapoint Solution

CCI was very clear about what it did not want in an email solution. The previous messaging system was a collection of hardware and software that was exceedingly difficult and costly to manage. CCI evaluated half a dozen email products including Microsoft Exchange, CommuniGate Pro, a number of “freeware” alternatives, and Mirapoint. “We dismissed the Exchange option early on because of the cost. And the freeware solutions would put us right back where we were with the previous system—difficult to manage and to scale. We didn’t want anything that was going to require huge amounts of headcount and resources. We wanted an appliance-based solution. Mirapoint was the only one that fit the bill.”

Mirapoint offered just what CCI was looking for, a single, turnkey solution that was easy to install and easy to manage. “We brought in a Mirapoint appliance for a trial,” said Kurt Rankin, senior engineer for ISP platforms at CCI. “Our sales person said it would only take 45 minutes to get it up and running. In fact, it only took 15. It took longer to rack than to configure.”

With assistance from Mirapoint Professional Services, CCI deployed four Mirapoint Message Server appliances on February 1, 2003. Then, in 2004, CCI acquired the local exchange carrier business of Texas Utilities, adding another 36,000 subscribers. CCI deployed eight Mirapoint appliances to support those subscribers and provide capacity for future growth—replacing 17 general-purpose servers.

Currently, CCI provides email services to around 90,000 users through POP and Webmail. IMAP is only used to transfer mailboxes from one server to another for maintenance. All of CCI’s Internet customers receive ten mailboxes, unlimited mail storage, and free anti-spam and anti-virus protection provided by Mirapoint’s MailHurdle™ edge blocking technology.

The MailHurdle technology provides industry-leading protection by blocking up to 80 percent of threats at the network edge. In combination with Mirapoint’s multi-layered email security technologies such as RAPID Anti-Spam and zero-hour RAPID Anti-Virus, customers can achieve overall catch-rates upwards of 98 percent with virtually zero false-positives.

CCI recently began offering a small-business bundle that includes value-added messaging features such as calendaring, group scheduling, and address book.

CCI has been looking to begin offering unified messaging services through Voice over IP technology, which would allow users to check their voice messages via email and email messages via their phone. In addition to the attractiveness of such “sticky” services to customers, the fact that both email and voice mail messages can be stored on the Message Server appliances already in CCI’s data centers allows for immediate profitability with minimal additional investment.

The Bottom Line

The Mirapoint solution has met all of CCI’s requirements including scalability, reliability, simplified management, and low TCO. “We saw a payoff early on with the ease of use and low administrative overhead of Mirapoint. And when we acquired the Texas property, we saw another payoff in the scalability that Mirapoint offered,” said Koester. “We’ve been able to quadruple in size without adding administrative headcount,” added Rankin.

Spam and virus protection has also provided cost efficiencies. “The incremental expense of providing free anti-spam and anti-virus protection reduces our technical support costs,” said Koester. “Eliminating one significant virus outbreak a year will pay for the cost of anti-virus software. And when we installed Mirapoint’s anti-spam and anti-virus appliances in Texas, the amount of mail that we handled dropped to a fraction of what we were dealing with before.”

Mirapoint has also delivered on reliability, according to Rankin. “I can’t think of a single time since we turned on the Mirapoint platform where there has been a true email outage.”

About Mirapoint

Mirapoint® is the market leader in appliance-based solutions for secure message networks in enterprise, service provider, and education organizations, with more than 115 million mailboxes served and secured worldwide. Customers use Mirapoint appliances including the Message Server mail appliance and RazorGate mail security appliance to build the messaging infrastructure that intelligently serves, secures and manages email. Mirapoint is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, with offices throughout North America, Europe and Asia. For more information on Mirapoint, visit its Website at www.mirapoint.com.

Configuration

- Mirapoint M400, M450, M4500, and M5000 appliances