

# State Agency Invests in Technology to Manage Increased Calls

Oregon Employment Department deploys Cisco Contact Center solution on single platform.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p><b>OREGON EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT (OED)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and Local Government</li> <li>• Salem, Oregon USA</li> <li>• Approximately 450 agents and adjudicators</li> </ul>
<p><b>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging legacy Nortel infrastructure</li> <li>• Lack of central management system and enhanced reporting capabilities</li> <li>• Inability to scale system with significant volume increase</li> </ul>
<p><b>NETWORK SOLUTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installed Cisco Unified Contact Center consisting of intelligent contact routing, call treatment, network-to-desktop computer telephony integration (CTI), and multichannel contact management over an IP infrastructure</li> <li>• Integrated customer service functions with a call center</li> </ul>
<p><b>BUSINESS RESULTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved functionality and maintenance of call centers throughout state</li> <li>• Centralized hardware with greater redundancy and improved reporting capabilities</li> <li>• Increased call distribution and customer service</li> </ul>

## Business Challenge

The Oregon Employment Department (OED) is an active partner in the development of the state's workforce development system. Its mission is to promote the employment of Oregonians through developing a diversified, multiskilled workforce; promoting quality child care; and providing support during periods of unemployment. Through 38 offices across the state, the department serves job seekers and employers by helping workers find suitable employment, providing qualified applicants for employers, and supplying statewide and local labor market information. Through the agency's unemployment insurance call centers, OED provides unemployment insurance benefits to workers temporarily unemployed through no fault of their own.

In 2004, OED transferred from an antiquated paper system of filing unemployment insurance benefit claims to an automated call center methodology. This change was put into effect to support an updated business model for the agency. At the time,

three regional call centers were created to manage incoming calls pertaining to new unemployment claim submissions, continuing eligibility, extensions, and unemployment payment inquiries. The regional centers were fielding calls from specified areas throughout the state in an effort to decrease long distance charges. "The three regional call centers were only connected indirectly. They were truly operating as separate systems," says Troy Rutten, chief information officer for OED. "Any system change or update had to be completed separately at each call center in addition to the test run. Essentially, all system updates and changes needed to be done four times, wasting time, labor, and money."

In 2008, the national economy started a downward turn, and unemployment began to rise; incoming calls into the call centers went into overdrive. According to Oregon's Labor Marketing Information website, the state's unemployment rate is continuously slightly higher than the national average; even in times of a strong economy. With the onset of the recession, Oregon ranked as high as third in national unemployment. Due to hardware and licensing constraints, the old system was at capacity for the number of staff that could be supported.

“Typically, the peak unemployment season is in January, which is when we receive the most incoming calls into the department,” says Tom Byerley, unemployment insurance administrator, for OED. “However, in 2008, we started hitting our yearly highs of approximately 7000 calls a day as early as September. By the time January 2009 rolled around, we were receiving about three times the normal amount. Additionally, due to the limiting system, we were unable to increase the number of employees answering claim inquiry calls, or agents as we refer to them, to support this influx.”

OED has an automated message that is played for every incoming call, providing useful information about claims, how to file online, and the like. The intent is to reduce the number of citizens who wait on hold for an available agent to address their inquiry. On the legacy system, OED was not able to make changes to the message without going through a support provider for application changes. The process to make changes to the message cost the agency additional money and could take a month or more to complete, at times missing the opportunity to communicate critical information to customers. Jon Debban, deputy chief information officer for OED says, “The lack of flexibility in the system caused the agency to rely more heavily on alternate methods of communication such as press releases, TV, and radio advertisements to inform the public.”

### Network Solution

The rapidly changing economy and rising unemployment created a sense of urgency for OED staff serving customers and supporting the technology. OED technical staff conducted research on call center systems, narrowing the field of choices. A Cisco system was identified as the optimal solution, because it met all of OED’s call center needs, is an enterprise-class solution, and the architecture is consistent with the State of Oregon networking solutions already in place. “Maintaining alignment with our state infrastructure simplifies the environment and improves stability on the state network for all agencies,” says Rutten.

Working with the local Cisco account team, OED began crafting the architecture for the new call center network in the fall of 2008 and deploying the Cisco® Unified Contact Center in October 2009. The contact center consisted of intelligent contact routing, call treatment, network-to-desktop computer telephony integration (CTI), and multichannel contact management over an IP infrastructure. It combines multichannel automatic call distributor functionality with IP telephony in a unified solution, thus enabling the OED to rapidly deploy a distributed contact center infrastructure.

“Our Unified Contact Center has provided smooth call routing and handling, better real-time data and reporting, flexibility to meet staffing needs, and expansion capability to meet other agency program needs as well,” says Debban. “Future uses to be explored include the system’s ability to handle real-time chat and web collaboration.”

### Business Results

OED has seen vast improvements to the functionality and maintenance of the call centers throughout the state since the deployment of the Cisco Unified Contact Center. The hardware for

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— Tom Byerley, Administrator, Unemployment Insurance Division, Oregon Employment Department

the call centers is now centralized with greater redundancy and improved reporting capabilities. “The stability of the system and the ability to maintain it are much higher,” says Byerley. “We are better equipped with the tools to understand what is going on within the system and how to respond accordingly.”

Continues Byerley, “We are no longer sustaining three separate data centers scattered throughout the state. Now, one system serves all centers. Over the IP infrastructure, citizen calls are getting through to agents faster as calls are transferred to the next available agent, not the next available agent in the caller’s particular region. This increased call distribution has proved to be beneficial to our overall business processes and allows for greater hardware flexibility.”

“No longer do we need a diverse group of agents at each call center location, every day,” says Byerley. “We can tap into a pool of agents who speak a wide variety of languages, such as Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese, to answer incoming calls throughout the state from one centralized location.”

Lastly, the OED staff is able to easily change and update the recorded information every caller

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<p><b>Routing and Switching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisco Media Convergence Servers</li> <li>• Cisco Catalyst® 3750 Series Switches</li> </ul> <p><b>Voice and IP Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise</li> <li>• Cisco Voice Portal</li> <li>• Cisco Provisioning Manager</li> <li>• Cisco Operations Manager</li> <li>• Cisco IOS® Software</li> </ul>

hears when calling into the department, thus decreasing citizen frustration and aggravation.

### Next Steps

OED is the only agency in the State of Oregon that has deployed a successful call center to this scale. “We are now discovering all the great things we can do from a business perspective with the new, unified call center system,” says Byerley. “Moving forward, we hope to add a workforce management component so we can leverage collected information and make fact-based decisions. This ultimately allows us to be more proactive and less reactive.”

### For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Unified Contact Center, go to:  
<http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/sw/custcosw/ps1844/>



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