

Lync 2013 Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Advantage Sales and Marketing

Website: www.asmnet.com

Customer Size: 30,000 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services

Customer Profile

Advantage Sales and Marketing, based in Irvine, California, provides outsourced sales, merchandising, category management, and marketing services. It has 30,000 employees.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Lync Server 2013
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Lync 2013
 - Microsoft Outlook 2010
 - Microsoft PowerPoint 2013
- Technologies
 - Active Directory Domain Services

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Advantage Sales and Marketing



For more information about Microsoft Lync Server 2013, go to: www.microsoft.com/lync

Sales and Marketing Agency Saves 70 Percent with Communications Solution

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Vince Cicone, Senior Systems Administrator, Advantage Sales and Marketing

Advantage Sales and Marketing (ASM), a national outsourced sales and marketing organization, was dissatisfied with some of its own outsourced services: audio conferencing and online meetings. ASM chose a Microsoft communications solution to provide conferencing services to 4,500 employees. With the Microsoft solution, it provided voice, instant messaging, and presence in addition to conferencing. ASM recently upgraded the solution to Microsoft Lync Server 2013 to provide additional capabilities and take advantage of its high-availability configurations. The company has reduced conferencing costs by 70 percent and experienced improved customer satisfaction.

Business Needs

Advantage Sales and Marketing (ASM) believes in outsourcing. The company is one of the leading outsourced sales and marketing organizations in North America, serving consumer packaged goods manufacturers and suppliers. The company's growth over the past 20 years is proof enough of the value of its outsourced services to its customers.

As a sales company, ASM must meet with potential customers, and those meetings often take place on the phone or through online meetings. During online meetings, employees frequently give presentations and demonstrate products. The company uses internal conferencing capabilities for gatherings such as virtual meetings for its distributed staff or for training.

Although ASM believes in outsourcing, it no longer plans to outsource critical audio and video conferencing capabilities. ASM had outsourced its audio and web conferencing capabilities to a conferencing service provider in an effort to reduce the complexity of its IT infrastructure. However, it found the services unreliable, difficult to use, and lacking features such as mobile capabilities. When the conferencing service provider increased its prices, ASM decided to look at other options.

ASM had a voice over IP (VoIP) solution in place and investigated the conferencing options it could provide. It found that the licensing was prohibitively expensive and that the solution would not interoperate with its Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 environment in the way ASM would have liked. In addition to Exchange Server 2010, ASM had many

other Microsoft technologies in place including an Active Directory Domain Services infrastructure, which also provided centralized enterprise accounts for all users and was configured to provide single sign-on to applications. Because of this existing infrastructure and the cost advantages over other solutions, ASM decided to deploy Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 as its communications solution.

Currently about 4,500 ASM employees have access to instant messaging (IM), presence, audio conferencing, online meetings, and telephony capabilities. Although ASM first turned to Microsoft for a conferencing solution, the IM and voice capabilities have become equally important for many employees. Because these capabilities have become so critical to employees, ASM wanted to deploy a solution with additional high-availability options to ensure redundancy.

Solution

ASM deployed Microsoft Lync Server 2013 for its robust high-availability options, its interoperation with other Microsoft products, and the comprehensive set of communications capabilities it provides. "Lync provides for all of our communications and collaboration needs from a single application, which makes it much easier for our employees to select the type of connection best suited to the situation," says Phil Ben-Joseph, National Director Technology, Advantage Sales and Marketing.

Adding Communications Options

Through the Microsoft Lync 2013 client, employees can easily initiate a conversation and switch between communications modes. "The escalation from IM to a call to desktop sharing is smooth. We can easily add functionality to a conversation as needed," says Vince Cicone, Senior Systems Administrator, Advantage Sales and Marketing.

Because Lync 2013 interoperates with other Microsoft products such as Microsoft Office, ASM employees can schedule conferences from Microsoft Outlook or initiate chat sessions or phone calls from within an email message. Employees' contact cards appear

universally throughout Microsoft Office products and display presence information, status notes, location, and organizational details. Employees can initiate a communication session from the contact card with a single click.

Since it frequently delivers Microsoft PowerPoint presentations to clients, ASM is excited that with Lync 2013, employees can give presentations in full fidelity, including videos. ASM customers can join a conference and view a presentation by using the Lync Web App, which they can access through a browser—without having to install the Lync 2013 client. "Using the Lync Web App, our clients and business partners are able to seamlessly connect to online meetings without the hassle of having to work through firewall and port issues," says Ben-Joseph.

To deliver these presentations, video conferencing units are currently available in meeting rooms at its main offices. Lync provides the opportunity to replace these units with devices connected to Lync Server. Switching to Lync online meetings in the conference rooms would enable employees to join video conferences from their desks if they are not at a location with a video-conferencing setup. ASM has deployed Logitech B910 HD web cameras to some of its staff to provide them with HD video-conferencing capabilities.

High-Availability Architecture

For voice, ASM has integrated Lync Server 2013 with its VoIP solution using a Direct SIP connection. Lync Server 2013 can exchange information with the VoIP solution through SIP so that employees can answer calls using either system. While ASM has no corporate initiative to replace its existing phones, many employees have adopted the Lync 2013 client as their primary method of communication. Many employees like the wide variety of devices, such as headsets from Jabra and Polycom phones that are certified for Lync 2013.

ASM has taken advantage of the high-availability options for its Lync Server 2013 deployment. It has Lync front-end pools installed at two locations in an active-active configuration. If a failure occurs at one site,

employees will transition to the other pool automatically. ASM has also configured the back-end Microsoft SQL Server database servers to use database mirroring to ensure that data is available at both locations as well.

Benefits

With Lync Server 2013, ASM has a communications solution that is both reliable and cost-effective—with results that include broad adoption by employees and greater satisfaction on the part of the company's clients and customers.

70 Percent Cost Reduction

When it started investigating its communications options, ASM wanted a great audio and web conferencing solution at a great price. With the Microsoft solution, it not only received conferencing, but also voice, IM, and presence, in addition to conferencing capabilities. It received all of this functionality at 70 percent less than the cost of the previous, outsourced service that only provided conferencing.

Delivers "Rock-Solid" Reliability

The company wanted a more reliable solution than it had with the outsourced conferencing solution. ASM expects that Lync Server 2013, with its multisite architecture and automatic failover capabilities, will continue to provide the high levels of reliability that ASM achieved with Office Communications Server 2007 R2, which Ben-Joseph described as "rock-solid." Lync Server delivers high levels of reliability without requiring extensive administration efforts due to its comprehensive management tools, such as the web-based Lync server control panel and Windows PowerShell scripting capabilities.

Rapid Employee Adoption

Employees at ASM quickly adopted Lync 2013 because of the easy, highly intuitive user interface and the interoperability with Microsoft Office and SharePoint Server. "I know our sales organization really likes being able to upload a PowerPoint presentation to a meeting and deliver it seamlessly," says David Wegley, Senior Exchange Administrator, Advantage Sales and Marketing.