

AAC PROMOTES POWER OF CISCO IP COMMUNICATIONS WITH XML APPLICATIONS



AAC Inc., a Cisco® Premier Certified Partner that has been in business for more than 20 years, has made a name for itself not just with its network engineering services but also with its development of Extensible Markup Language (XML) software programs for the Cisco IP Telephony platform. With headquarters in Virginia, and additional offices in Washington, D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Orleans, AAC is also a Cisco AVVID (Architecture for Voice, Video and Integrated Data) Partner and holds several Cisco technology specializations.

“Half the time, we’re a Cisco Premier reseller, using our Cisco specializations in IP Telephony, VPN Security, and Wireless,” said Doug Bowlds, vice president of AAC. “We resell Cisco solutions in the federal and commercial market spaces, including state and local governments. But we’re also an independent software vendor and a Cisco AVVID partner. We recently launched a reseller program for our PhoneTop software to leverage the Cisco IP Telephony channel.”

Bowlds says that AAC’s XML products enable its customers to get the most from their investment in Cisco IP Communications solutions by taking advantage of the IP phones’ ability to process XML information. AAC’s recent work with the Town of Herndon, Virginia, provides a good example. AAC not only replaced the town’s aging phone and network systems with a converged network platform, it also provided the town with its

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vertical Market/Technology

IP Telephony/Government

Partner

AAC Inc. has headquarters in Vienna, Virginia. AAC is a Cisco Premier Certified Partner and also a Cisco AVVID Partner and holds Cisco specializations in IP Telephony, VPN Security, and Wireless. AAC has found tremendous value in developing XML software applications for the Cisco IP Communications platform. AAC says that its software products deliver real business solutions and allow its customers to get the most from their investment in Cisco IP Communications equipment by using the IP phones’ ability to process XML information.

Customer

The Town of Herndon is located in Fairfax County, Virginia. What started as a farming community in 1879 is today home to more than 22,500 citizens. Herndon offers a vibrant business sector and is known for its growing technology presence on the East Coast.

Challenge

Herndon had an aging network system and an analog phone system that was at maximum capacity. When a local company provided the Town with fiber optic cabling at cost, Bill Ashton, director of IT for Herndon, decided the time was perfect to update to a converged network.

Return on Investment

AAC deployed a new Cisco infrastructure to support a converged voice and data network. It included its own PhoneTop Amber Alerts software so that when a local missing-child Amber Alert is issued, Ashton can push that alert to any or all of the town government’s IP phones. Ashton has projected a 30 percent savings on the town’s phone system alone, and with the Amber Alerts solution, he is improving a business process that benefits citizens.

PARTNER SUCCESS STORY

AAC INC.

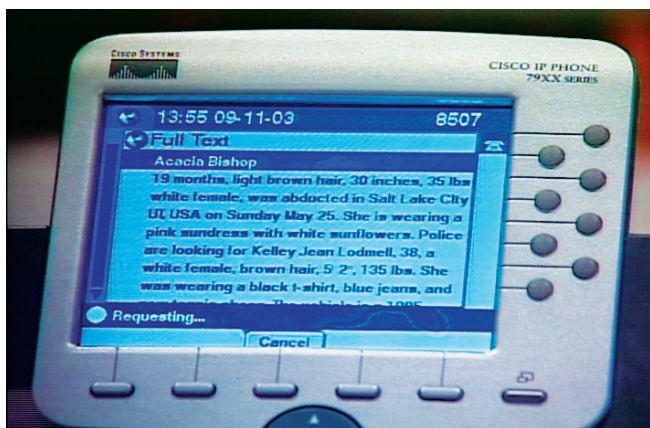
PhoneTop Amber Alert Services software. The application quickly sends Amber Alerts, which are high-priority bulletins about missing children, to all IP phones in Herndon's local government offices.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT ADDS VALUE TO PARTNER'S BUSINESS

The software-development side of AAC's business started in 2000 when the company bid for a deployment at a school district that wanted an IP phone system.

"We were discussing the capabilities of the IP phones with the IT director there," explains Bowlds, "and he had no idea that these phones provided anything other than dial tone. We decided to start building the value of the phone into our proposal, so we included an application that would allow teachers to take attendance via their phones." Once AAC saw the value in approaching things from a reseller perspective as well as a systems integrator perspective, it started building special applications for demonstrations that it ran for prospective customers.

When Bill Ashton, director of IT for the Town of Herndon, Virginia, was looking for a way to clear up what he calls "a quagmire of PBX phones and voice mails," he turned to Cisco Systems,[®] and the company provided him a list of certified vendors.



With AAC's PhoneTop application, a Cisco IP Phone can deliver AMBER alerts about missing children.

"Only AAC came in and talked about their applications for the IP telephony solution and refined my vision of what we could do with this system," Ashton says. "Other firms came in and sold me on the IP telephony features—cost savings, flexibility, scalability—all of which I needed. AAC presented all of those things but also showed how they could help me solve real business problems and better serve my customers—the employees and citizens of Herndon. We were fortunate that we were able to access AAC through an existing IT Consulting Services and Expert Assistance contract."

AAC showed Ashton its PhoneTop Amber Alerts program. "I recognized it as a perfect fit for us to use the phones as real tools," he says. Whenever police authorities issue an Amber Alert for a missing child, CodeAmber.org receives the alert notification directly from law enforcement or their first tier media partners (ABC, CBS, CNN, FOX and NBC) in reciprocal information exchange. CodeAmber pushes the Amber Alerts as news flashes across thousands of Websites.

"Not every PC user may be browsing a site that subscribes to CodeAmber, but an IP phone is always on," says Bowlds. "We take CodeAmber's posted alerts and push them to IP phones. We constantly poll the CodeAmber site for the three-digit zip code prefix indicating where the alert is being issued, and then we deliver it to the appropriate server. We have had extreme cooperation from the CodeAmber.org people to make this happen."

As the "owner" of the Herndon application, Ashton has the ability to declare who in the town government organization receives the alert. For instance, not only Herndon police can help in a missing-child case. Other workers such as building inspectors are also on the streets so he makes those people aware of the Amber Alert as well. Ashton sees AAC's PhoneTop Amber Alerts application as a perfect complement to the town's new IP telephony system.

“AND WITH THE AMBER ALERTS APPLICATION ON TOP OF THE IP PHONES, I KNOW WE’RE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN SHOULD A CHILD EVER GO MISSING IN OUR AREA.”

AAC APPLICATION IS A BONUS FOR TOWN’S NEW IP TELEPHONY SYSTEM

Before AAC stepped in, Ashton was trying to manage an aging network system and a phone system that was at maximum capacity.

“When the town hired a new employee, in many cases, we had to issue them a cell phone,” says Ashton. “We had a mishmash of equipment that was difficult and expensive to manage and administer. The 260 employees I support were upset because we couldn’t deploy new services, and the phone infrastructure in particular was a cost nightmare. When a local company provided the Town with fiber optic cabling at cost, I decided it was time to make the move to a converged voice and data network.”

AAC worked carefully with Ashton and his IT team and with Cisco and organized a detailed design workshop using the Cisco “Steps to Success” model.

“We sat down with all the major players and designed a solution,” explains Bowlds. “As soon as the fiber optic was in, Ashton wanted us to light it with a whole new data network.” AAC replaced the town’s existing network infrastructure with new Cisco infrastructure to support voice and data services. It implemented a Cisco core switch at the main facility with Gigabit Ethernet to distribution layer switches and access layer switches. AAC migrated the town’s PCs, peripherals, and servers to the new network infrastructure and migrated the existing phone system to the Cisco IP Telephony system and the Cisco Unity™ unified messaging solution. AAC designed and built automated attendant units for each department, implemented distributed attendant console capability, and provided user training on the IP phones. Ashton knows the investment was money well spent.

“Even during the deployment, my customers saw the benefits of the new system and were patient through the deployment process,” he says. “AAC delivered great training, and employees are thrilled to get their voice mail messages in their e-mail inbox.”

Ashton thanks AAC for delivering a system that addresses the town’s phone and networking issues and says the two organizations are true partners.

“AAC didn’t have the attitude of ‘We’re done, so pay us and we’re out of here,’” he says. “They were committed to solving every problem.”

CONVERGED NETWORK IMPROVES BUSINESS PROCESSES

Today, the Town of Herndon is rapidly disconnecting phone lines and data circuits, and Ashton is projecting a 30 percent savings on phone costs alone due to the reduction in long-distance toll charges and switching to IP-based phones.

“Our new converged network gives us a chance to alter some of our business processes,” he says. “There are redundancies and inefficiencies we can get rid of and do things better and smarter. The system is really easy for my staff to manage, and if a little problem comes up, they can handle it themselves instead of calling in an expensive contractor. And with the Amber Alerts application on top of the IP phones, I know we’re doing everything we can should a child ever go missing in our area.”

With a new police station scheduled to open next year, Ashton is reviewing data to determine whether IP is the right solution for Herndon’s emergency and public safety sector. In addition, AAC is developing an application that Ashton is interested in that would allow him to broadcast state and local emergency notices via the IP phones.

“We’re seeing a huge number of organizations considering replacing their existing PBX phone systems with IP communications,” says Bowlds. “Lots of integrators are jumping on the bandwagon trying to catch up with the technology. But we’ve spent three years educating people about IP, and now we’re taking the next step, which is XML applications for the phones. We want to help our customers maximize their investment in IP by showing them how very powerful the technology is.”

ABOUT CODEAMBER

CodeAmber.org is the largest provider of Amber Alert broadcasting on the Internet. Started in 2002, CodeAmber now reaches over 120,000 Websites and displays over one million news tickers daily. CodeAmber delivers XML feed to major media, government, and wireless phone services. Based in Mandeville, LA, CodeAmber last year expanded and now reaches all 50 states as well as Canada. CodeAmber works directly with law enforcement and media, and delivers descriptions and photographs to news desks within minutes after an Amber Alert is issued.



AAC Inc.
8470 Tyco Rd.
Vienna, VA 22182
Tel: 877 366-3867
www.aac.com
www.PhoneTop.com



Town of Herndon
P.O. Box 427
Herndon, VA 20172
Tel: 703 435-6800
www.herndon-va.gov



Corporate 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: 408 526-4100