



FOUNDRY
NETWORKS

CASE STUDY: MISSOURI EMPLOYERS MUTUAL

Missouri Workers Comp Provider Makes a Claim for Foundry



[HTTP://WWW.MEM-INS.COM](http://www.mem-ins.com)

SUMMARY

INDUSTRY

Insurance

With nearly 17,000 policyholders, Missouri Employers Mutual (MEM) is the largest provider of workers compensation for the state of Missouri. The company focuses on giving its policyholders excellent customer service, high-quality loss prevention expertise, and timely, personal claims management.

COMPANY DESCRIPTION

Missouri Employers Mutual is the largest provider of workers compensation for the state of Missouri. The company employs almost 300 people at its headquarters in Columbia and satellite offices in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield.

MEM's nearly 300 employees are distributed across four offices—approximately 160 are in Columbia with the rest located in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield. The construction of a new corporate headquarters in Columbia spurred the company to look at updating its network infrastructure and phone system.

OBJECTIVE

- Upgrade network infrastructure at new headquarters in Columbia and integrate the network with a VoIP solution
- Select equipment that could support power over Ethernet, virtual LANs, comprehensive reporting, and increased security

OBJECTIVE

Prior to constructing the building, MEM was experiencing difficulties with administering its previous network equipment and limitations on its phone system capabilities, says Robert Graham, security administrator at MEM. "Our previous system didn't provide the reports we needed, so we decided that the move would be a good time to upgrade. We were leaning toward voice over IP [VoIP], but our existing infrastructure wouldn't have been able to support it."

SOLUTION

- Foundry Networks FastIron SuperX and FastIron Edge Switches form the foundation of MEM's network infrastructure
- IronView Network Management and sFlow deliver rich traffic visibility from core to edge
- Foundry's IronPoint access points provide voice over wireless LAN capabilities to MEM's IT help desk

One of MEM's VoIP requirements was to power its new phones using Power over Ethernet (PoE). The company was also looking for equipment that would deliver comprehensive reporting, virtual LANs (VLANs) management, and security.

After evaluating product offerings from several companies, Graham and his team chose a powerful set of networking solutions from Foundry Networks.

SOLUTION

Graham says Foundry won the contract over other vendors for a number of reasons, including cost, excellent customer references, and robust features. The Foundry switches' capabilities that caught his eye were support for PoE, metropolitan rings, 802.1X, and virtual router redundancy protocol (VRRP), which eliminates the single point of failure found in a static routed environment.

RESULTS

- The integration of Foundry's network equipment and Cisco's VoIP equipment has been seamless
- Cost savings from one cable drop, rather than two drops, to each office or cubicle for both voice and data
- Strong reporting features give IT staff rich information about traffic flows and help troubleshoot problem areas
- Integration of sFlow and Snort has led to robust intrusion detection and prevention of malicious attacks

All these features are put to work in MEM's new network. The MEM headquarters, which was completed in November 2005, includes two FastIron® SuperX switches in the network core. The network edge features Foundry FastIron Edge 4802 switches and FastIron Edge 2402 units. MEM has just finished installing Foundry switches at the company's three remote locations.

The flexible, highly reliable network supports multiple business-critical applications, including an Oracle database, financial applications, a specialized workers' compensation insurance system, a policy system, and a document imaging system. SMTP, Web, FTP, and VoIP traffic share the network.

The new VoIP system combines products from Cisco Systems that fully integrate with the network infrastructure from Foundry. To further test the network's voice capabilities, MEM installed Foundry's IronPoint wireless access points for voice over wireless LAN (VoWLAN) for use by the company's IT help desk.

MEM uses Foundry's IronView® Network Management (INM) platform and sFlow to understand traffic activity and to gain a complete picture of traffic flows from the core to the edge of the network.

RESULTS

The integration of Foundry's network equipment with Cisco's VoIP gear has been a big success for MEM, according to Graham. "We knew VoIP was the future, and we liked the idea of integration between the phone and computer. The phone system is a critical business tool for us, so call quality is a major concern for our customer service group."

Initially, MEM debated using equipment from two vendors, as the IT team feared interoperability issues. "Different integrators were saying that Foundry and Cisco would not work together, yet the integration between the Cisco phone gear and Foundry network gear has been seamless," says Graham. "We were very pleased that the two did so well together."

The new infrastructure is more than able to handle the 400 to 450 calls the company receives every day, and Graham says that customers are pleased with the call quality.

On an end-user level, the transition to the new phones has been easy. "The old phones were difficult; it was hard to transfer calls and get into voice mail," Graham says. The IT team has been pleased with the new management and administration features. "Our administrator can do a lot more than before, resulting in time savings."

The VoIP system has also led to significant cost savings. MEM is using least cost routing to reduce service fees, and combining voice and data on a single network has reduced cabling costs. "If we didn't have VoIP, we would have two cable drops to every cubicle or office. Now we have one drop," Graham says. He adds that VoIP deployed at remote and home-based offices has allowed the company to look at soft phones for those instances, further decreasing costs.

In terms of network management and security, Graham says the difference between the old network and the new Foundry-based network is like night and day. "Before we had no capabilities; we had a mishmash of vendors and no reporting capabilities to help understand what our traffic was doing. Now we are getting a lot of information."

Prior to the new reporting features, Graham says he would get calls at 4 p.m. every day about poor server response. He was able to detect through INM that at that time each day, a large amount of data was being backed up, which resulted in the slow server responses to users. "We were able to pinpoint the problem and troubleshoot it," he says.

Looking at security, MEM has gained many more capabilities. By using sFlow, the company can take traffic flow information and convert it to a format that can be read by Snort—an open source industry standard for intrusion detection and prevention—and look for anomalies and malicious traffic. The integration of sFlow and Snort will also allow Graham and his team to shut down ports if necessary.

Looking toward the future, MEM knows it can rely on Foundry to take it to the next level. "Foundry will be able to support us in the future," Graham says. "We invested in them with the mindset that they will be there for us down the road."

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— Robert Graham
Security Administrator
Missouri Employers Mutual

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