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ProCurve Networking Powers IP Revolution at HP Japan's Customer Response Centre

"By moving from the old PBX system to IP telephony, we cut operating costs by over 40 percent. With the ProCurve network, the Customer Response Centre now has a communications infrastructure that is flexible and easy-to-use, and which can handle future requirements."

Takaharu Oku
Network Service Department, IT Infrastructure Service Centre, Operations & IT Control Centre
HP Japan

invent

Abstract
HP enjoys a reputation as a world-class organization, not just for its wide range of advanced IT solutions, but also for the standard of its service and support.

The company is particularly well-known for the service and support it provides for its UNIX, Linux and Windows solutions. In an age where any breakdown in an information system can be critical to business performance, HP Japan has established a complete support infrastructure that provides emergency recovery of IT resources and swift retrieval of data in the event of a problem.

Seeking to improve the service level of its call centre and cope with the extra work of supporting Compaq systems, HP Japan recently decided to replace its 10-year-old PBX system with an advanced IP telephony communications network. The new communications infrastructure is built around Avaya IP telephony systems and cutting-edge network equipment from ProCurve Networking.

The Challenge

The Customer Response Centre is the first point of contact for customers of HP Japan and is therefore the front line for proving the value of HP's service and support.

Mr. Takashi Konno, head of the Hardware Front Remote Support Department, Enterprise Solutions Centre, explained that the call centre handles customer enquiries and fault reporting from medium to large organisations, looking after systems purchased direct from HP or through partners. "Although we had successfully integrated the Compaq and HP call centres, bottlenecks in the old PBX system meant that future expansion was difficult."

Mr. Kyoichi Yokosaka of the Expert Support Department, Enterprise Solutions Centre, said, "In October 2004, the HP Response Centre took responsibility of the support system for former Compaq business users. With the PBX system then, we did not have resources to expand the number of telephones or establish additional call-flow, and it was clear our resources could not meet future requirements. Therefore in June 2005 the company decided to revamp the communications infrastructure."

HP Japan also set a target to complete the changeover from the PBX system to IP telephony within 100 days.

"A major challenge for the call centre was to be able to respond quickly to demands and changes from both inside and outside the company. Often, a large number of seating changes accompany system and process modifications. With the PBX system, whenever the seating was changed, a request had to be made to the vendor to modify the PBX settings or move the telephone facilities, and this was both time-consuming and costly," said Mr.. Konno.

Solution Requirements

Mr. Yoshikazu Kawamura, an end-user from the Expert Support Department of the Enterprise Solutions Centre, said that in its selection of equipment for the new communications infrastructure, the Response Centre put most emphasis on future potential, scalability and ease of maintenance.

Customer at a Glance
The HP Japan Customer Response Centre is part of HP's Global Solution Centre infrastructure designed to deliver excellent support and services to valued customers. It serves as a competency centre, an escalation support centre and a mission-critical support centre.

More than 500 people are employed in the Response Centre, which operates 24x7 and plays a critical role in demonstrating the value of HP's service and support. The Customer Response Centre provides support services for HP's line of UNIX, Linux and Windows servers, including the HP-UX, HP-9000, DEC Alfa, and IA servers.

In order to achieve reliability, flexibility and improvement in service quality, the project team spelt out the following requirements for the new communications network:

1. Redundant connections to ensure high network availability and stable operation 24 hours a day.
2. Ability to handle high-level ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) functions, including analysis of call waiting times and connecting to a call agent in the shortest possible time.
3. The system must be flexible so that it can be simply and quickly modified for any change to personnel and settings.
4. Highly scalable for business continuity planning.

The project team also considered the input of users who stressed the importance of transfer of call-flow. Mr. Shingo Hiratoko from the Proliant & IA Support Department of the Commercial Solutions Centre, said, "The PBX system had been in use for over 10 years and a major issue was a lack of confidence that it could seamlessly transfer 100 to 150 accumulated call-flows."

The Solution

After comparing and evaluating three suppliers, the project team selected the combined solution from ProCurve Networking and Avaya.

Mr. Takaharu Oku from the Network Service Department of the IT Infrastructure Service Centre, explained the choice. One of the options was to upgrade the existing PBX system and this could be achieved quite economically, but this idea was soon discarded because there was a risk that operations would be interrupted during the upgrading.

The decision to go for the IP telephony network from ProCurve and Avaya was based on the track record of both companies and confidence that the technology solutions from both companies would produce the desired results. Avaya is a global partner of HP and its products, tested in combination with ProCurve equipment, met the stringent performance standards set by the project team.

"The ProCurve equipment could cope with a dual power source, ensuring high availability, and Avaya's IP telephony systems came with an operation guarantee. We conducted a load test and were satisfied that QoS (Quality of Service) and performance were

maintained even when all ports were used," said Mr. Ryo Tomana from the Network Service Department.

In addition, the team was confident of the high reliability of ProCurve equipment because there had been very few requests for repairs received by the Response Centre.

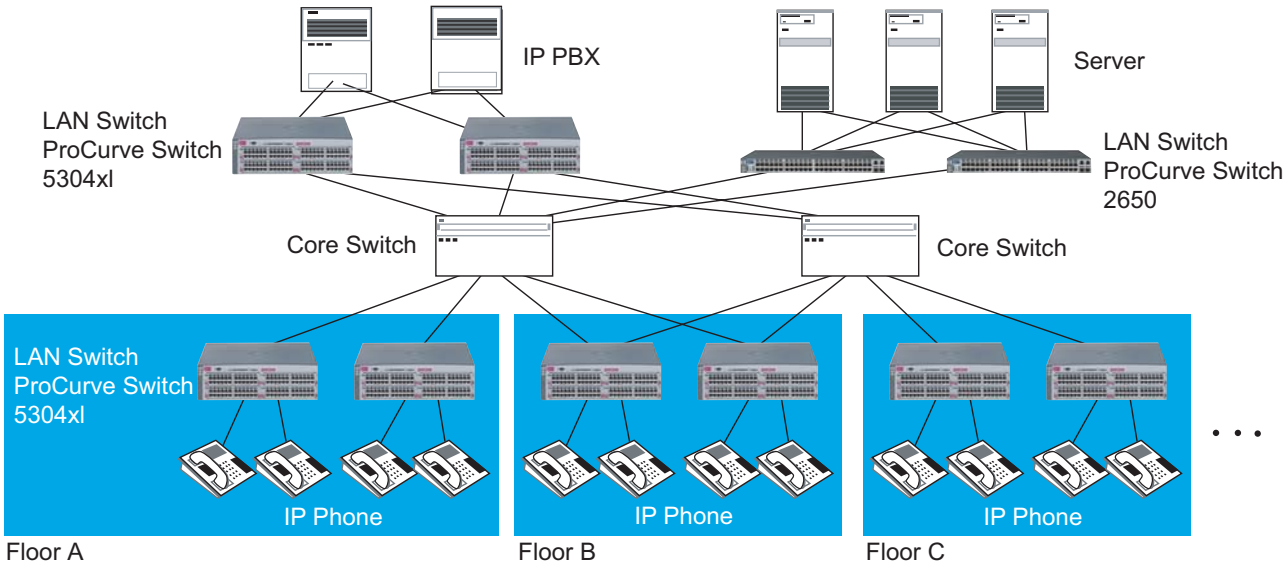
The backbone of the IP communications network is 12 ProCurve 5304xl/2650 switches. Since the biggest concern was uninterrupted operation, the network design included many features to ensure a robust network.

An external UPS (uninterruptible power supply) provides a redundant power source to prevent any temporary power blackout. Further, the ProCurve Switch 5300xl Series was chosen because it provides PoE (Power over Ethernet) and there was no need to worry about the power source for the computer monitor.

The ProCurve Switch 5300xl Series is a high performance switch with an original HP CPU and its reliability is further enhanced because it is designed with fewer parts. The Avaya IP telephones used by the call centre agents are connected to the 5300 switches.

ProCurve offers more than high cost-performance. ProCurve switches are backed by a lifetime product warranty which extends to the power source, fan and accessories such as the MINI-GBIC.

HP Response Centre Network Topology



Business Benefits

The Customer Response Centre successfully established the new IP telephony system within 100 days, and the switchover from the PBX system was completed over a weekend. The Centre estimates that it has cut operating costs by over 40 percent as a result of increased operational efficiencies.

"Previously, any system and process modification would take two days to implement, but now, it can be done in half a day and work costs have been reduced by over 40 percent," said Mr. Takaharu Oku from the Network Service Department.

According to Mr. Yoshikazu Kawamura, using IP telephony, the settings for call routing can be easily changed by reconfiguring the network without having to re-wire the telephones. In some instances, the call agents can do the modifications themselves — saving time as well as resources.

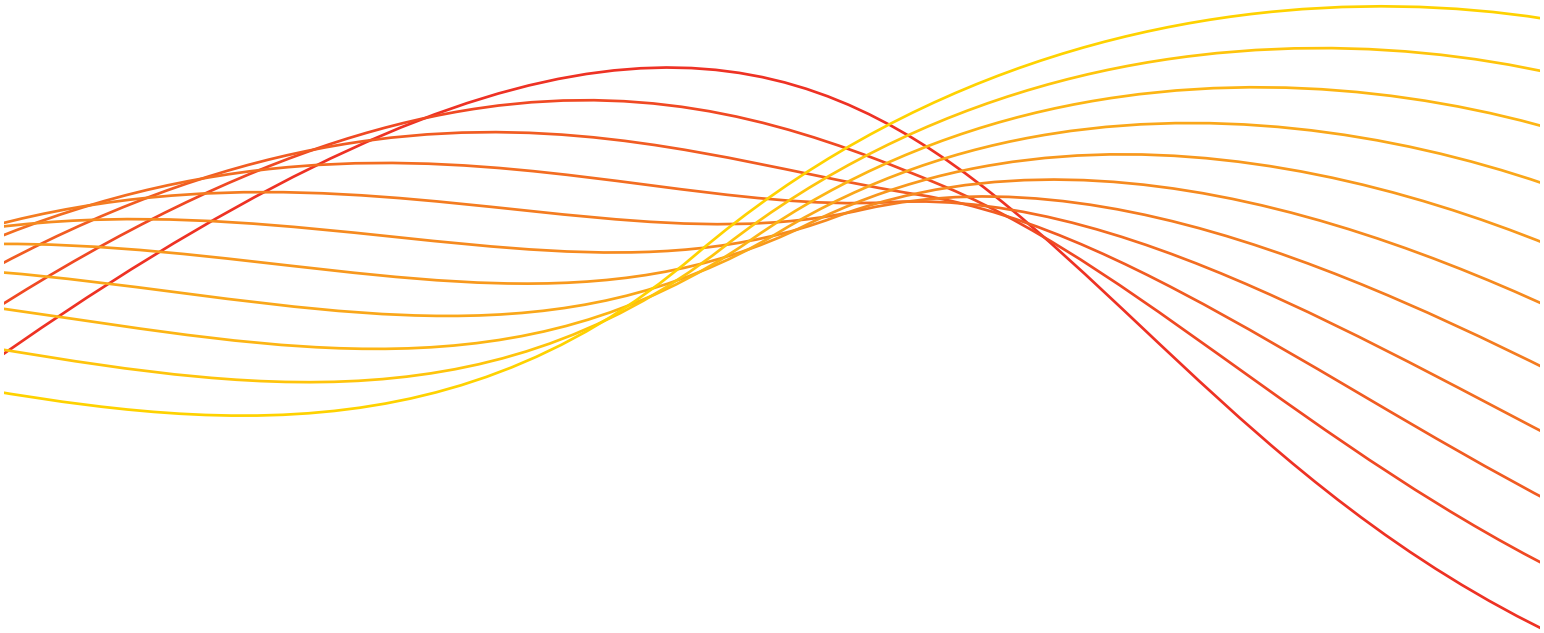
Mr. Ryo Tomana believes that the greater flexibility of the new system gives call centre staff much more freedom and improves overall customer satisfaction. There are no physical restrictions on where telephones can go, and it will be easier to cope with any future expansion.

"We have established the foundation of an open telephony environment. In the near future, it is even possible for agents to receive calls at home or while on trips. Because it is so flexible and easy-to-use, the ProCurve network infrastructure is just like any other 'utility' — readily available on-demand," added Mr. Takaharu Oku.

ProCurve Networking by HP

The ProCurve Networking business unit of HP is a supplier of enterprise networking solutions comprising wired and wireless networking products, services and solutions — including WAN routers, Ethernet switches, routing switches, wireless access points and network management applications — which allow customers to build networks based on open standards that meet current and future needs for security, performance and reliability.

The ProCurve Networking Adaptive EDGE Architecture™ is a unique design strategy that creates a secure, mobile, multi-service network by placing intelligence at the edge — where users connect and policies are enforced. This innovative approach creates a dynamic network infrastructure designed to keep up with advancing technology and user needs while protecting business investments.



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