

Swim School Supports Soaring Enrollment with Cisco Network

La Petite Baleen depends on Cisco switched network to help employees and customers enjoy fast, dependable service at three campuses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>LA PETITE BALEEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry: Recreation • Location: San Francisco, CA
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable owners to manage three swim school sites as one with secure access to critical business information anytime from anywhere
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependable, high-performance network helps staff work more productively and deliver consistently superior service anytime, anywhere
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Small Business Pro solution supports networked line of business application for secure, dependable business operations at three campuses

Challenge

La Petite Baleen began in the backyard pool of John and Irene Kolbisen’s Half Moon Bay home in 1979. The swim school’s developmental aquatic program emphasizes a balance between love and discipline, teaching not only swimming, but also self-esteem and coping skills. Today, La Petite Baleen operates three swim schools in Half Moon Bay, San Bruno, and San Francisco. Its instructors offer classes seven days a week for swimmers of all ages, ranging from infants to adults.

To stay productive and provide personalized attention to everyone enrolled at the school, employees at La Petite Baleen depend on a sophisticated communications network that ties together its three campuses.

“Our employees often work at different offices at different times, and they still need to connect to all their resources, such as email, business documents, and other data,” says John Kolbisen, owner of La Petite Baleen. “Our staff use a line of business database application running over our network to handle our key operations like membership, scheduling, enrollment, and billing. Regardless of which school they are attending, when customers interact with our staff, they receive consistent, informed service.”

As La Petite Baleen became more successful, its enrollment grew from 5000 to nearly 9000 students. This rapid growth began to affect the performance of the school’s business operations, including its line of business application. La Petite Baleen could not afford to have its most important services interrupted by network delays and crashes.

“If network services drop, most everything at La Petite Baleen stops,” says Rees Roberts, CEO of IS Works, the school’s technology provider. “Instructors can still teach, but they cannot schedule classes or handle day-to-day business operations.”

La Petite Baleen needed an easy-to-manage network solution that would keep its key business operations running smoothly. The solution would have to be affordable, yet provide the features, security, and reliability that the school needed to power its networked business application.

“It’s great to be able to see what’s going on, from any location or from home. I can look at schedules from all three of our school sites, or review manager logs. The line of business application running on our Cisco network lets me oversee the school anywhere I am, at any time.”

– Sue Luna, Executive Director, La Petite Baleen.

Results

To deliver the performance needed to support its growing business, La Petite Baleen upgraded its core network to a Cisco® Small Business Pro solution. The new network enables staff to stay productive and keep the school's operations running smoothly, regardless of their location. Employees can use the line of business application to find out who is in the pool at a specific time, update enrollment and registration, check schedules, or handle billing issues.

"It's great to be able to see what's going on, from any location or from home," says Sue Luna, executive director at La Petite Baleen. "I can look at schedules from all three of our school sites, or review manager logs. The line of business application running on our Cisco network lets me oversee the school anywhere I am, at any time."

The Cisco solution also helps improve collaboration, enabling employees to interact with colleagues at all three of the school's locations, to speed decisions and work better together as one company.

"Sharing information was difficult in the past, because we had lots of phone calls and faxes back and forth," says Luna. "Keeping up with a growing enrollment was tough. With our new network and communications system, we can let employees handle booking and other tasks from any location."



Using the network for daily business processes not only brings employees together, but enables La Petite Baleen to use its workforce more effectively.

"The Cisco solution lets us be more flexible in terms of how we allocate our staff," says Kolbisen. "In the past, our customers had to contact their local branch to enroll in classes or pay a bill. With our networked line of business solution, clients can contact any office for booking or other services."

The solution also helps the school to make the most of its staff and employees' skills.

"Our Cisco solution allows for simplicity of staffing, since our employees can now specialize in tasks and no longer need to wear multiple hats," says Kolbisen. "This helps us control costs, because a lower salaried employee can now be hired for a less demanding position. It also helps employees improve job performance and satisfaction by enabling them to concentrate on the tasks that they are best at."

Setting up and managing the network are much easier as well, using the Cisco Configuration Assistant (CCA). Designed specifically for small business networks, this PC-based application utilizes a simple graphical user interface (GUI). It includes troubleshooting tools and provides real-time status updates of all the Cisco small business devices in the network.

"The GUI-based configuration is a big help," says Roberts. "CCA lets us handle the configuration and monitoring of network devices, so it is a tool that I use regularly. Being able to perform configuration tasks with a graphic interface is a big plus."

Solution

La Petite Baleen's network is based on an affordable Cisco Small Business Pro solution that was recommended and deployed by IS Works, a Certified Cisco Partner. At the heart of the network are Cisco ESW 500 Series Switches, a secure switch foundation that can support data, voice, video, and wireless communication.

"We chose the Cisco solution because it delivered the reliability we needed, as well as security and ease of configuration," says Roberts. "The solution also eased management and troubleshooting, because there are plenty of engineers out there who know how to work with Cisco equipment."

The Cisco ESW 500 Series Switches include a rich set of features to give small businesses peace of mind in knowing that their most important network services will stay up and running. For example, an optional redundant power supply helps La Petite Baleen ensure continuous network operation.

“Redundant power was important to us,” says Kevin Wilson of IS Works. “Any redundancy that we can build into the system for reliability and uptime is vital.”

Cisco ESW 500 Series Switches also support Power over Ethernet (PoE), eliminating the need to install separate power cables for the school’s network devices.

“PoE was a requirement,” says Wilson. “We need this feature to provide power for phones and other network devices.”

To provide secure Internet connectivity and support communication between each school, La Petite Baleen installed Cisco Integrated Services Routers. These easy-to-manage routers include built-in support for data and wireless networking, as well as robust security to help safeguard sensitive business information. By protecting the swim school’s network and information from hackers and other threats, La Petite Baleen can stop attacks before they can affect the business.

Cisco IOS Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) architecture provides end-to-end IP services to all of the school’s locations, and enables the organization to customize bandwidth for specific applications.

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Small Business Pro 500 Series ESW Switches
- Cisco Integrated Services Routers

“We utilized MPLS because we needed to have guaranteed bandwidth allocation, in order to make all of our applications run in a way that would enable the business to thrive and grow,” says Roberts.

With its dependable, scalable network in place, La Petite Baleen can continue to deliver the dedicated, personalized service to swim students throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, and still have plenty of room to grow in the future.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smallbusiness> or contact your authorized Cisco salesperson.



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