



## Event Services Company Stays Connected with Unified Communications Solution

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Professional services

### Customer Profile

PSAV provides event services to customers in North America. The company has 2,500 North American employees operating from more than 600 locations.

### Business Situation

With a widely distributed and mobile workforce, PSAV wanted to improve the communications capabilities of its employees.

### Solution

PSAV chose to deploy Microsoft® Office Communications Server and Unified Messaging in Microsoft Exchange Server 2007. This solution provided more capabilities and was a fraction of the cost of competitive offerings.

### Benefits

- Replaces third-party conferencing to save more than U.S.\$300,000 annually
- Improves sales processes
- Results in quicker help desk resolutions

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Bob Strama, Vice President and Senior Technical Officer, PSAV

PSAV is a leading provider of audiovisual and event technology support to clients worldwide. With 2,500 employees operating from more than 600 locations in North America, PSAV must ensure that employees stay connected no matter where they are working. PSAV was looking to integrate its communications capabilities and reduce the costs it was paying for conferencing services. Working with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Project Leadership Associates, PSAV determined it could get the capabilities it needed using Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 and Unified Messaging in Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 at a fraction of the cost of competitive offerings. PSAV is now using the integrated instant messaging, presence, voice mail, and audio, video, and Web conferencing capabilities to improve business and reduce fees previously paid to audio and Web conferencing service providers.

**“We needed a better way to stay connected than phone and e-mail. We used audio and Web conferencing services extensively, but the current solution is expensive and lacked integration.”**

Bob Strama, Vice President and Senior Technical Officer, PSAV

## **Situation**

PSAV helps clients manage their audiovisual and event technology needs for meetings, conferences, and other events. The company operates from 600 offices throughout North America and often has small offices in hotels and convention centers to improve client service.

With a widely distributed and highly mobile workforce, staying connected is essential for the organization. Clients expect to be able to contact their event technology managers when they need them, and employees depend on each other for their individual expertise in design and troubleshooting.

In 2007, PSAV began to look for ways to improve communications. “We needed a better way to stay connected than phone and e-mail,” explains Bob Strama, Vice President and Senior Technical Officer at PSAV. “We used audio and Web conferencing services extensively, but they were expensive and lacked integration.” PSAV was spending more than U.S.\$300,000 per year in fees to service providers for audio and Web conferencing.

PSAV recently installed Cisco Unified Communications Manager in its datacenter to handle voice calls. It uses SIP Trunking to connect to the telephony network, and it was able to remove the PBX equipment from its larger offices. It still has telephony equipment with voice and data circuits at the remaining small offices.

## **Solution**

PSAV considered using competitive technology for audio and Web conferencing, but the licensing costs were prohibitive. After meeting with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Project Leadership Associates (PLA), and discussing options for deployment, PSAV found that Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 could be deployed at a fraction of the cost. It had already looked at deploying

Office Communications Server for its instant messaging and presence capabilities. When Office Communications Server 2007 R2 was released, PSAV decided that it would be the ideal solution for its conferencing needs. Not only is the Microsoft solution less expensive than the competitive product offerings, but it also provides seamless integration with other solutions PSAV has in place.

Office Communications Server 2007 R2 offers instant messaging and presence functions that are not only available in the Office Communicator client but are integrated into other Microsoft products that PSAV uses on a daily basis, such as Office SharePoint® Server and the Microsoft Office Outlook® messaging and collaboration client. In addition, Web, audio, and video conferencing capabilities are built into the solution. Users can schedule conferences from within Microsoft Office Outlook and can escalate to an audio, video, or Web conference from an instant message chat with the click of a button. Web conferences are accessed through the Microsoft Office Live Meeting client.

The solution also provides Desktop Sharing. With the click of a button, users can view each other's desktops and optionally be given control over each other's computers. Desktop sharing replaces Web conferences for many collaborative efforts at PSAV such as producing sales proposals or developing project plans for events.

In January 2009, PSAV began working on the Office Communications Server deployment with assistance from PLA. By February 2009, PLA and PSAV had designed the server architecture, built the server environment, and completed testing. This was accomplished by following PLA's Rapid UC Deployment Methodology, focused at bringing quick value to the deployment of the Microsoft Unified Communications platform.

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Bob Strama, Vice President and Senior Technical Officer, PSAV

PSAV deployed five server roles on three physical servers. Windows Server® 2008 Hyper-V™ virtualization technology was used to virtualize the gateway and Microsoft Office Communicator Web Access roles to reduce costs. PSAV also deployed Microsoft Forefront™ for Office Communication Server for anti-virus protection.

Microsoft Exchange Unified Messaging was added to the existing Exchange Server 2007 deployment to provide voice mail service to all users. Unified Messaging was integrated into the Cisco Call Manager PBX and delivers voice mail messages to Microsoft Office Outlook inboxes. Users can access these voice mail messages without calling into the voice mail system and save them with any other e-mail messages they receive on a particular topic. Exchange Unified Messaging also enables users to use a telephone to access their calendar and e-mail messages.

PSAV completed extensive user testing because not all of its client PCs are managed or in the same domain. It wanted to ensure users could access the new capabilities independently of their hardware configuration and without using virtual private network (VPN) software. All 2,500 user accounts were enabled on Office Communications Server 2007 and Exchange Unified Messaging in May 2009. Immediately following, PSAV started the client rollout, deploying Microsoft Office Professional 2007, Forefront Security, and Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager clients at the same time as the Office Communicator 2007 R2 and Live Meeting clients. Because multiple applications were deployed at the same time, the rollout was conducted slowly over a three-month period to ensure users could receive adequate support during the transition. During this time many users started accessing Office Communications Server through the Web client to take immediate advantage of its capabilities.

All PSAV employees are now equipped with instant messaging, presence, audio, video, and Web conferencing, and Exchange Unified Messaging. PSAV is testing the voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) capabilities on 100 users as a possible telephony solution for remote users. PSAV is also looking to integrate its existing Polycom video conferencing infrastructure into Office Communications Server.

### Benefits

The Microsoft Unified Communications capabilities were adopted very quickly at PSAV because they immediately improved work processes. By giving employees an integrated communications solution and presence information that enables them to decide the best way to communicate, Office Communications Server helps PSAV operate more efficiently. “The complete integration of the solution was the big win for us,” notes Strama. “All of the functionality is available across the platforms and applications we use.” In addition, by replacing expensive third-party conferencing options, the solution produces immediate cost savings.

### Improved Business Processes

The Microsoft Unified Communications solution is being used across the company. “It truly has become a part of our daily work processes,” explains Strama. “Instead of sending an e-mail for short questions we use instant messaging and get answers faster.” PSAV has also seen a dramatic increase in Web conferencing usage as employees escalate their instant messaging conversations into Office Live Meeting.

Presence information has also been useful for everyone. With employees constantly on the move to event locations, people can be difficult to find. PSAV uses Windows® SharePoint Services sites to track projects so users can open a project site, see who is at the site, and contact them from within

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Windows SharePoint if they are available. PSAV has also integrated presence information into its corporate directory, which is hosted on Office SharePoint Server. Now users can see who is available and contact them from the directory site.

“The sales organization was an early adopter because they used our conferencing services on a regular basis, and we had people spending \$2,000 per month on conferencing,” explains Strama. “With Office Communications Server, that sales overhead is reduced.” The sales organization also prefers the on-demand nature of the Microsoft conferencing solution. With the previous conferencing service it had to schedule conferences in advance through the service desk. It also frequently uses the Desktop Sharing feature in Office Communicator to work together on proposals instead of e-mailing files back and forth, which improves the quality of sales proposals and enables the sales teams to produce proposals faster than they could when they used e-mail to collaborate.

The service desk has also adopted Desktop Sharing to resolve computer issues. “We have other products available to our service desk for remote access, but Desktop Sharing is so easy that it has become the preferred option,” explains Strama. “It is helping our service desk resolve issues faster.”

“PSAV was a model customer to take advantage of so many of the features available with Microsoft Unified Communications solutions. Instead of their employees struggling to find the best method to communicate effectively with their coworkers, PSAV has positioned their communication and collaboration solutions to be a business enabler, allowing them to focus on running their business, provide best of class customer service, and drive growth,” says Don Penland, Partner at PLA.

### **Cost Savings**

The Office Communications Server 2007 R2 solution will enable PSAV to save more than \$300,000 per year on audio and Web conferencing costs. “The cost savings over our third-party audio and web conferencing services justified the cost of the entire Microsoft deployment,” notes Strama. PSAV is also deploying the Forefront Security suite for both servers and clients. This solution is replacing the company’s current anti-virus solution and will save the company an additional \$45,000 per year.

PSAV has also noticed a reduction in international calls from the pilot through the use of instant messages and audio conferences to communicate rather than the telephone. With more than 200 international locations, international calling is a large expense for the company. PSAV has not estimated the savings yet, but expects to receive significant cost savings related to international calls.

Having just completed the company-wide rollout, PSAV expects to realize additional benefits as users find new ways to improve their ability to manage meetings, conferences, and events using unified communications. The ability to reach key individuals quickly is already helping to resolve issues faster, improving the service PSAV provides to clients. PSAV would also like to expand the number of users with access to the telephony features of Office Communications Server and believes this will reduce the costs of its telephony infrastructure even more.

## For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

For more information about Project Leadership Associates products and services, call (312) 441-0077 or visit the Web site at: [www.projectleadership.net](http://www.projectleadership.net)

For more information about PSAV products and services, call (562) 366-0620 or visit the Web site at: [www.psav.com](http://www.psav.com)

## Microsoft Office System

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### Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
  - Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2
  - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
  - Microsoft Office Outlook 2007
  - Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 R2
  - Microsoft Office Live Meeting
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
  - Windows Server 2008
- Technologies
  - Windows SharePoint Services
  - Windows Server 2008 Hyper-V