Tech Electronics Offers Enterprise Solution for Pyramid Foods that Enhances Workflow and Safeguards for Future Expansion

COMPANY
Pyramid Foods

CHALLENGE
Develop a unified communications system for Pyramid Foods' corporate office, data center and all 53 grocery store locations in Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas.

SOLUTION
Tech Electronics designed an integrated, enterprise-class solution that included Mitel IP phone systems, Brocade data switches at each location, firewalls and wireless instant access points throughout the stores.

RESULTS
Unified Communications System enhances workflow and safeguards future expansion for Pyramid Foods.

Missouri-based Pyramid Foods was once a small neighborhood grocery store with roots dating back to 1919. Today, the company oversees 53 retail grocery stores in three states operating under several brand names such as Price Cutter, Ramey, Smitty's and Save-A-Lot. Despite having multiple names, providing a consistent, customer-centric presence has been a critical focus for Pyramid Foods.

The employee-owned company continues to thrive by keeping its business ventures close to home, working with regional farmers to offer locally-grown, organic food and provide families with helpful nutritional information. This level of quality and commitment to the communities has helped Pyramid Foods' stores become a staple of the day-to-day lives of many area residents.

Ensuring convenience for its customers without sacrificing quality is a top priority for Pyramid Foods. As the company continued acquisitions and new store developments, including adding pharmacies and Starbucks coffee shops with free Wi-Fi service, it discovered how inefficient it was to maintain the existing telephone and communications systems at its stores. In fact, some system installations dated back more than 20 years.

A Flexible and Future-Proof Communications System

The inefficiency of Pyramid Foods' telephone and communications systems caught the eye of the company's president and CEO, Erick Taylor. He realized the need for a standard system that would improve communications between all locations with a consistent network numbering plan. The company then turned to longtime partner and systems integrator, Tech Electronics of Springfield, for a solution.

Over a period of several months, Tech Electronics mapped each Pyramid Foods location, reviewing each store's communications systems, including existing access points, wireless local area networks (WLAN's) and cabling systems. Tech Electronics discovered that Pyramid Foods had existing WLAN's meant for small businesses and residential settings. This limited the management, capacity and scale of communications capabilities for the company's multiple locations.

"Pyramid Foods needed an enterprise-class solution to match the company's own expectations of superior customer service and employee productivity," said Jennifer Huxley, Director of Tech Electronics of Springfield. "The next step was bringing an integrated solution to the table that included IP phone systems, data center switches at each location, and instant access points throughout the stores."

Tech Electronic recommended the Mitel® IP solution and opted for the 3300 Integrated Communications Platform (ICP). This unified solution was chosen for its ease of use, productivity-enhancing applications and networking capabilities. This platform allows for

for transparent communications between store departments and locations through features such as extension-to-extension dialing, audio web conferencing, audio conference bridge, and integrated voice mail. In addition, this feature-rich system allows Pyramid Foods to add applications and new Mitel® software as the company continues to expand.

Pyramid Foods needed data network switches for all sites to begin the transition to the new Mitel® system. The systems integrator opted for industry-leading Brocade switches for the high-performance connectivity in storage, IP, and Ethernet fabric network environments. These highly reliable and scalable switches are designed for a wide range of environments, and were the best solution for Pyramid Foods' network of stores and services.

Pyramid Foods' growth over the last few years saw a massive increase in data usage within and between its stores, causing the company to spend valuable time troubleshooting the systems when down. Furthermore, Pyramid Foods was still using DSL services through its telephone service carrier, which posed a threat for users to breach the network.

Originally, Tech Electronics started by providing wireless solutions for Pyramid Foods and soon incorporated the in-store Starbucks Wi-Fi as well. Aruba Networks, the leading provider of wireless infrastructure solutions for enterprise networks, was chosen as the Wi-Fi solution because it could integrate seamlessly with the Mitel® system and Brocade data switches.

Aruba's Wi-Fi solutions are simple to deploy, easy to manage, and scale from small remote locations to large, open environments. The centralized, cloud-based configuration and management of IP services gives store managers' high-performance Wi-Fi to better-manage inventory and customer interactions, all from a handheld device. In addition, the new WLAN offers customers and guests the highest-quality in-store mobility experience on the market.

Unified Communications System Provides ROI, Safeguards Future Expansion

The new unified communications system streamlines the day-to-day operations of Pyramid Foods' network of stores; the company can grow its Wi-Fi managed services business with profitable value-added services as it continues to expand its footprint.

Since implementing the enterprise-class system, Pyramid Foods has eliminated the use of old service provider lines, and does not have to sustain aging phone systems from multiple manufacturers. By switching to the standardized network numbering plan, Tech Electronics personnel can repair its systems remotely. The state-of-the-art system has made new business ventures a breeze, such as allowing the company to easily move the system to a new location themselves.

"We have a product that is software-based and can grow with us as we expand our business" said Kena Mann, Director of Information Technology for Pyramid Foods. "Tech went out of their way to show us the new features being developed for our system, so we know exactly how to leverage our business and services we provide. Tech Electronics continues to go above and beyond to bring us the best solutions for our needs now and in the future."

Conclusion

Pyramid Foods now has a communications solution that is software-based and can grow with the company as it expands its business. Tech Electronics went above and beyond to show Pyramid Foods new features for its system, ensuring the company knows exactly how to leverage its business and services provided now and in the future.