



L.A. Weight Loss Sustains Massive Growth Using Secure, Converged Enterprise Solutions from 3Com

The Challenge: Founded in 1989, L.A. Weight Loss Centers is one of the world's fastest growing weight management companies. Offering a regimen of personalized meal plans and counseling, the firm has expanded its weight-loss centers by 2,500 percent since 1994 and now has over 600 company-owned and franchised centers throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Presently, L.A. Weight Loss's goal is to open 50-75 new centers per year.

To grow its business further, L.A. Weight Loss decided to tap markets where it has yet to set up weight loss centers by establishing a call center at its Horsham, PA, headquarters from which it could enlist and counsel new clients by phone. The company's legacy Avaya Definity PBX phone system, however, lacked the flexibility to support call center functionality easily or economically. Employees could not easily check voicemail messages when out of the office, nor could the company's president broadcast voice messages to the weight-loss centers.

In addition, L.A. Weight Loss labored to intercept viruses and malicious traffic, which on occasion slipped past its firewall and caused costly downtime. As it grew, the firm needed to ensure that its network and data were safe from attackers and threats like viruses, phishing, Trojans, and spyware.

Moreover, the Horsham data network, powered by Hewlett Packard Fast Ethernet switches, could not scale to support burgeoning volumes of data flowing from the weight-loss centers, which executives need for market analysis and sales forecasting.

Why Solutions from 3Com and TippingPoint, a division of 3Com

To optimize its communications, L.A. Weight Loss needed a proven IP telephony system for its new call center, a comprehensive security solution to protect against Internet and VoIP threats, and a more powerful network to deliver growing volumes of sales and marketing data from its centers.

"Our communications upgrade was driven by our call center, so we looked at 10 vendors, including Avaya, Mytel, Toshiba, Siemens, Alcatel, Suretel, and 3Com," said John Janthor, vice president, IT, L.A. Weight Loss Centers.

"3Com IP telephony platforms gave us the best functionality and value. We also found that TippingPoint Intrusion Prevention Systems (IPS's) provided the pre-emptive and pervasive voice and data protection we wanted and that 3Com was the only vendor with a complete portfolio of enterprise networking systems to meet our needs."

To deliver the reliable, scalable network performance the weight-loss leader required, in April 2005 it began to deploy a 3Com solution at its headquarters based on the 3Com

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Switch 7700 platform. The robust, multilayer switch provides switching and routing of 10/100, Gigabit, and 10-Gigabit Ethernet connections, and allows the company to easily segment its network using virtual LANs. The Switch 7700 also delivers policy-based Class of Service and Quality of Service (CoS/QoS), enhancing support for the company's IP telephony system. Security features including 802.1X Network Login and advanced Access Control Lists (ACLs) help ensure that only authorized users have access to network resources.

To distribute network services to the 110 employees at the firm's main location and deliver VoIP, L.A. Weight Loss uses a number of innovative 3Com Layer 2/3/4 stackable switching systems. Six 3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 4400 PWR 10/100 switches support QoS and Power over Ethernet (PoE), further enhancing the company's VoIP deployment. Six 3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 3870 systems provide secure Gigabit links to servers, and can deliver 10-Gigabit performance to meet future needs. Additionally, to enhance connectivity at a server farm several miles away, L.A. Weight Loss deployed three 3Com Switch 5500G-EI Gigabit Ethernet switches. The Switch 5500G-EI provides the highest levels of resiliency for non-stop operation, along with secure, high-performance Gigabit connectivity.

To safeguard the network, L.A. Weight Loss installed TippingPoint Intrusion Prevention Systems behind the firewalls at both its headquarters and a nearby remote server farm. In the initial six months following its installation, the IPS at the company's main site blocked 25 million attacks that the firewall failed to stop, including suspicious zip files, Trojans and malware that cause buffer overloads.

Additionally, the TippingPoint Digital Vaccine service provides updated filters weekly—more frequently when needed—to proactively defend against the newest threats, reducing risks from zero-day attacks. Providing the most powerful network protection available, the systems block

malicious and unwanted traffic, deterring hazards like worms, viruses, Denial of Service attacks, and those that target VoIP deployments.

"In this age of sophisticated attacks, traditional firewalls are no longer sufficient," said Janthor. "Moreover, the filters we receive protect weaknesses in our network, eliminating the threat from vulnerabilities that hackers can exploit."

In May 2005, L.A. Weight Loss added a 3Com NBX® V3000 IP Telephony Solution, which distributes voice traffic over Ethernet data networks, to serve as the foundation for its new call center. The solution offers a rich array of business features, 400 hours of voicemail storage, and can support up to 1,500 devices. Moreover, the firm uses the Power over Ethernet (PoE) capability of its Switch 7700 and SuperStack 3 4400 systems to provide electrical power for the 110 3Com IP phones at its headquarters.

To maximize the network for performance and availability, L.A. Weight Loss uses the 3Com Network Director management application, which enables its IT staff to graphically map, configure, and troubleshoot devices quickly and easily.

Benefits_Summary

L.A. Weight Loss now has a secure, converged communications infrastructure with sophisticated call center capabilities. Its 3Com VoIP solution offers advanced routing and call control needed to support advanced telesales. Using the Ethernet-based system, IT staff can manage the call center and all telephony functionality in-house, reducing ownership costs over traditional phone platforms.

"Our 3Com VoIP system's easy-to-use features improved our messaging and productivity," said Janthor. "We centralized voice mail, for example, to reduce costs and bolster communications with our centers. Remote users can easily check voice mail by accessing a web page, and we set up distribution groups so our president can broadcast voice mails simply by dialing one telephone number."

L.A._Weight_Loss_Centers

With its new 3Com data network, L.A. Weight Loss is accelerating the flow of data from Tomax point-of-sales solutions at its weight-loss centers and its Oracle databases, providing the firm with the information required to effectively manage its expansion.

“We’re improving our competitive position so we can sustain our growth, and have every confidence in our ability to block viruses and hackers from disabling our network.” Janthor concluded. “Thanks to 3Com, we can better meet our mission of helping people to lose weight and lead healthier lives.”

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