



## Global Software and Services Firm Reduces Costs, Builds Community with Unified Communications

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** IT services

### Customer Profile

Aspect helps customer-centric organizations deliver a next-generation customer experience through software solutions that exploit enterprise communications and collaboration platforms. It employs 1,800 people.

### Business Situation

Aspect had grown quickly through acquiring companies that enhanced its products and services, which resulted in disparate communications solutions and siloed branches of the organization.

### Solution

Aspect upgraded to Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to help further reduce costs and provide a more comprehensive communications solution to create a unified culture.

### Benefits

- Reduced costs
- Helped create a unified culture
- Improved productivity
- Created a more cohesive IT organization
- Strengthened support organization

"After deploying Microsoft enterprise voice and retiring all of our PBX equipment, we recovered our investment within nine months."

Jamie Ryan, Senior Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Technology Officer,  
Aspect

Aspect builds customer relationships by uniting the enterprise with next generation customer contact. Aspect has grown rapidly by acquiring companies with products and services that help support this vision, but each company also came with its own communications infrastructure, which resulted in a siloed organization. To resolve this, Aspect deployed a Microsoft communications and collaboration solution for its 1,800 employees, which helped it reduce costs, create a common culture, and improve productivity. It decided to upgrade its solution with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to help further reduce costs, ease management, and support an agile and rapidly growing workforce.



## Situation

Founded in 1973 in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, Aspect is a leading global provider of customer contact solutions. As a member of the Microsoft Partner Network with Gold competencies, the company's vision is to help customer-centric organizations deliver a next-generation customer experience through software solutions and services that fully exploit the enterprise communications and collaboration capabilities of Lync Server. It also provides expertise around using additional Microsoft technologies, such as Microsoft SharePoint Server in customer contact centers to help workers better service their customers. Aspect employs more than 1,800 people in 25 countries.

Aspect has grown rapidly by acquiring companies that complement its product and service portfolio. "For several years, we probably acquired a new company every 12 to 18 months," explains Jamie Ryan, Senior Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Technology Officer at Aspect. "With any acquisition, we always want to integrate the new technology into our platforms as quickly as possible. The disparate communications systems we had in place through acquisitions made that more difficult to do."

Aspect decided to deploy Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 to provide presence, instant messaging, and conferencing (audio, video, and web) capabilities, across the organization. It also deployed enterprise voice through Office Communications Server and consolidated voice mail and email into one inbox with Exchange Unified Messaging. The company also integrated Office Communications Server with its own product, Unified IP 7, in all of its support centers. Aspect deployed Office Communications Server to help unify the company and integrate new products

and services faster and improve customer value. It also wanted to unify the IT department, which was maintaining separate infrastructures that also required different skill sets. It also wanted a faster way to integrate newly acquired companies into the IT environment.

Although Aspect experienced real benefits with its Office Communications Server deployment, it still saw areas for potential improvement. Because its teams are geographically dispersed, Aspect wanted to increase the social networking dynamic of its communications solution, to help workers connect and collaborate even though they might not be in the same office. The company also continued to have more employees working from home or from remote locations, so it wanted to ensure that it can provide robust conferencing and sharing solutions that are easy to use. In addition, Aspect wanted a solution that was easier to manage and enabled the IT department to bring new companies on board quickly.

Lastly, Aspect recognized early on that unified communications would be critical to delivering next generation customer support in all of its support centers.

## Solution

To help ease management and create an even more cohesive communications environment, Aspect decided to upgrade to Microsoft Lync Server 2010. Lync Server provides enhanced versions of the communications capabilities provided by Office Communications Server 2007 R2—presence, instant messaging, robust conferencing, and enterprise voice—as well as improvements in topology, deployment, and management tools.

The company deployed Lync Server 2010 at its three data centers in the United States,

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the United Kingdom, and Singapore. Aspect installed Lync Server in a fully a virtual environment, using Windows Server 2008 Hyper-V virtualization technology, which enabled it to drastically reduce the number of servers required to run its communications solution. “We removed more than 20 servers,” says Bill Lynch, Senior Director of IT at Aspect. “We run Lync Server on two servers with a load balancer in front for redundancy.” In addition, it has deployed an archive server, edge server, and Monitoring server at each location.

By implementing a Microsoft enterprise voice solution, Aspect fully retired all of its 16 private branch exchange (PBX) systems. In the Americas and Europe, Aspect used session initiation protocol (SIP) trunking service from Verizon to provide voice connections through Lync Server. “We were the first Verizon customer to use its multisite, multicountry model, which means that people can use local numbers,” explains Ryan. “We believe location-specific numbers are a requirement to be part of the local community.” In Singapore, Aspect connected Lync Server to the public-switched telephone network through a gateway, but it plans to use SIP trunking service as soon as it becomes available.

With Lync Server, the company’s centralized IT team is taking advantage of the expanded management capabilities to manage the communications solution across the organization. Using the Windows PowerShell command-line interface, the IT team can easily automate repetitive tasks, or add or edit user settings for groups of users. Aspect is also using the Monitoring server for auditing and reporting. The Monitoring server collects call detail reports (CDRs); usage information related to VoIP calls; IM messages, audio and video conversations, meetings, application

sharing, and file transfers; numerical data describing the media quality on the network and endpoints; and call error and troubleshooting information for failed calls.

Because the Microsoft Office Live Meeting client has been integrated into the Microsoft Lync 2010 desktop client, employees now have one single interface where they can view presence, send instant messages, place voice calls, or set up ad hoc collaboration sessions and online meetings. About 60 percent of all employees use video conferencing, including all of the executive team, which uses it to conduct staff meetings for geographically dispersed teams. As they did with Office Communications Server 2007 R2, employees continue to use desktop sharing to collaborate on projects, but now they can choose which parts of their desktop they want to share with colleagues. In addition, both the internal and external support organizations at Aspect use capabilities such as instant messaging, conferencing, and desktop sharing to work with customers and help them troubleshoot issues.

Almost 25 percent of Aspect employees work from home, so they can have a difficult time getting to know their coworkers. Now employees are also taking advantage of enhanced contact information with social networking features like the Rich Contact Card, which displays people’s pictures in addition to organizational information, such as their managers and direct reports. Eventually, Aspect plans to upgrade to Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, which means employees can take advantage of further social networking tools, such as Skill Search, to find subject matter experts in other departments or other regions more easily.

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Bill Lynch, Senior Director of IT, Aspect

The support organization at Aspect takes full advantage of these features to deliver improved customer support to its global customers.

Aspect also takes advantage of the interoperation between Lync Server 2010 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2010. “With presence in email, people can see immediately if the sender is available and can click to call or start an IM session to answer a question immediately,” says Ryan. In addition to receiving voice mail in their Microsoft Outlook inboxes, employees can now also access voice mail messages from the voice mail tab in the Lync client. They can also listen to coworkers’ voice mail greetings through the Lync client to hear how to pronounce their names properly.

### Benefits

By deploying Lync Server 2010 to provide communications and collaboration capabilities for its own employees, Aspect gets a full sense of the benefits of how a Microsoft unified communications solution can help its own customers. “We have developed an expertise around Microsoft communication and collaboration technologies,” says Ryan. “Our Global Support and Professional Services organization does not talk about the ‘theory’ of how unified communications works and benefits customers. We live and breathe this every day.”

#### Reduced Costs

Aspect experienced significant financial benefits from deploying a Microsoft unified communications solution. “After deploying Microsoft enterprise voice and retiring all of our PBX equipment, we recovered our investment within nine months,” says Ryan. In addition to eliminating expensive PBX equipment and reducing its hardware footprint, Aspect reduced costs in the following areas:

- Reduced external conferencing by 90 percent, saving U.S.\$1.2 million annually.
- Eliminated T1 lines for local and long distance calling, saving \$300,000 annually.
- Eliminated \$275,000 a year in PBX maintenance costs.
- Reduced costs by \$300,000 a year to support employees who work from home.
- Reduced mobile phone charges when usage dropped by 30 percent because people rely more on instant messaging to communicate.

#### Helped to Create a Unified Culture

With the social networking capabilities in Lync Server, Aspect has created a more unified organization where people feel like they are part of the same team. “We have so many remote workers in disparate regions, and having features like pictures and organization charts helps people feel more connected and integrated,” says Lynch.

Because Aspect maintains offices in 25 countries and has many employees for whom English is a second language, it believes that the social networking features in Lync can help break down cultural and language barriers. “Even little things like having the ability to mouse over people’s names to hear their greetings and how they pronounce their names can make a big difference in building a relationship,” explains Ryan.

#### Improved Productivity

By having a real-time communications solution like Lync, Aspect believes that employees are more productive. One of the biggest benefits is the interoperation between technologies like Lync Server and Exchange Server. “When you put the whole Microsoft suite together, it’s very easy to be

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productive," says Ryan. "You see someone's presence through Outlook, and you can click to call immediately."

By using Lync Server, people have also changed the way they communicate—even between different levels of the organization. Communication is more informal, so people waste less time. "People used to take time to craft formal requests through email for things such as a new computer," explains Ryan. "Now they just send an instant message. It used to be about how communication happened—now it is about getting answers."

People also tend to use tools such as desktop sharing more frequently. With a single click, they can share an application or any part of their desktop to collaborate or get answers to questions quickly. In addition, audio and video conferences are more productive, and people no longer waste time traveling to meetings. "The executive team immediately saw that video conferencing made meetings significantly more productive, and they pushed it across the organization," says Ryan. "Additionally, our customer support organization uses these features extensively on a daily basis."

#### **Created a More Cohesive IT Organization**

As Aspect grows, it can more quickly merge organizations into existing systems, which means it no longer has siloed IT teams supporting different areas of the organization. In addition, roles within the IT team are no longer broken down by technologies; there is no Exchange Server team, Lync Server team, or network team. "From our perspective, the groups are integrated more fully," says Ryan. "You cannot have unified communications without a unified team. And from a job perspective, the roles are richer, and people have more opportunities."

#### **Strengthened Support Organization**

Both the internal and external support teams at Aspect use Lync Server to help troubleshoot and resolve issues. "Customer support uses desktop sharing all the time to take over a customer's desktop and to solve problems," says Ryan. "That was a big win we never anticipated."

Lynch adds, "With a centralized IT team supporting a global organization, we have seen tremendous benefits from using voice and desktop sharing to solve remote problems."

By upgrading its communications solution with Lync Server 2010, Aspect continues to provide the latest technology to help its employees feel like part of a cohesive team, no matter where they work. "At first it was about the technology," says Ryan. "But it really ends up being a cultural product, and it changes how people communicate."

## 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 in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. 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 Aspect products and services, call (888) 412-7728 or visit the website at:

[www.aspect.com](http://www.aspect.com)

## Microsoft Lync Server 2010

Microsoft Lync Server 2010 ushers in a new connected user experience that transforms every communication into an interaction that is more collaborative, and engaging; and that is accessible from anywhere. For IT, the benefits are equally powerful, with a highly secure and reliable communications system that works with existing tools and systems for easier management, lower cost of ownership, smoother deployment and migration, and greater choice and flexibility.

For more information about Microsoft Lync Server 2010, go to:

[www.microsoft.com/lync](http://www.microsoft.com/lync)

### Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Microsoft Lync Server 2010
- Microsoft Office
  - Microsoft Lync 2010

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