UNUM

Case Study

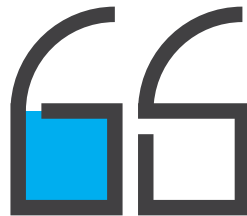## How The SMUGGLER Production Agency Saved Its Cisco Phone Investment and Nearly $2,000/Month in VoIP Costs

Suzie Burton is Director of Operations at SMUGGLER, a commercial media production company with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and London. She has been with SMUGGLER for over 19 years. Suzie is one of those linchpin employees who "keeps everything working," from managing the interns and meeting with the executive team, to making sure the company's internet and phone needs are met. Without her, things would begin to fall apart in fairly short order.

But, early in the Fall of 2019, Suzie had a problem.

SMUGGLER's old on-premises Cisco phone system was beginning to show its age. The Cisco desk phones were fine. But the on-premise Call Manager Express systems in the New York and Los Angeles offices were past the end of their useful life and starting to fail. This caused many problems, especially during important conference calls. The problems resulted in frequent technician visits to SMUGGLER offices to install patches and run tests.

I couldn't be happier with the UNUM platform! Using its UCaaS offering with our Cisco phones was a great business decision."

Suzie Burton,
Director of Operations,
SMUGGLER

The phone systems that SMUGGLER used were no longer supported by Cisco. Suzie was able to keep the aging and unsupported systems working for a while with MOHSO's help (which she describes as "amazing"). But Suzie finally had to admit to herself that it was time to make a significant change with SMUGGLER's phone infrastructure.

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SMUGGLER is a visual storytelling powerhouse. It produces commercials for some of the world's biggest brands such as Harley-Davidson, Budweiser, Apple, Heineken, and Adidas. SMUGGLER has about 60 employees, spread out among its three offices.

Sometimes SMUGGLER employees are on the road doing shoots that will become powerful visual stories. But most of the time they are at their desks in their offices doing all the preparation work for the filming days. Suzie estimates that about 95% of employees' days are spent in this way. At their desks. On their computers and on their phones. Every employee and in-house freelancer has a desk phone. Employees use their desk phones to coordinate with each other, outside vendors, outside freelancers, agencies, and the other SMUGGLER offices.

This makes having a smoothly working and reliable phone system critical to SMUGGLER's success. As Suzie explains, "Our entire business is based on the internet and our phone system. If our phones aren't working, we're dead."

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To replace SMUGGLER's aging on-premises phone system, Suzie turned to the UNUM Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) platform. She was certainly aware of alternative solutions such as 8x8 and RingCentral. However, she chose the UNUM solution because it…

- Is an enterprise architected platform built on Cisco hardware and technology and she likes the quality of Cisco products and services and the reputation of the Cisco brand.

- Allowed employees to keep the Cisco desk phones they were already using (so no new training would be required).

- Let SMUGGLER re-purpose its existing desk phones, which achieved significant cost savings.

- Can be customized to meet specific business requirements and workflows

- Is built and supported by MOHSO, which has a customer service level she greatly appreciates.

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What is UNUM?

UNUM is a Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) platform. UNUM is built on Cisco's technology and hardware and delivered as a cloud-based service. It's unified voice and collaboration service is designed and equipped to meet the demands of today's business. It combines the security benefits of a traditional on-premise phone system with the flexibility and scalability of a cloud-based platform.

A customer on the UNUM platform can scale from a single phone to thousands of phones across one or more offices. UNUM can be deployed globally. In addition to traditional phone functions, UNUM also incorporates other Cisco communications technologies such as a softphone app that allows users to connect to UNUM using their laptops and smartphones.

UNUM provides all the key features a voice system should have:

- Direct Extension Dialing
- Direct Inward Dialing (DID)
- Individual Voicemail Mailbox
- Unlimited Local and Long-Distance Calling
- High Definition Voice
- Company Directory services
- Ad-hoc Conferencing
- Auto Attendant

A helpful benefit of UNUM is that customers do not need any in-house technology expertise to use the system. The system is fully configurable and maintained by a 24/7 Network Operations Center. Customers do not need to dispatch any technicians to set up or service it.

UNUM allows companies to avoid the burden and cost of installing and maintaining an on-premises phone system. It is a fully managed, cloud-based platform. Companies can avoid large capital expenditures (capex) on phone system equipment and move to a scalable operational expenditure (opex) financial model. For a flat monthly fee per seat, users get access to UNUM's feature-rich system plus unlimited support. Additional features like Contact Center and Call Recording are also available add-on services. Customers have the option of renting Cisco's industry best, and highly sought after IP Phones at a small monthly fee, or they can choose to purchase them outright. Repurposing existing Cisco IP Phones or SIP-enabled devices is also supported. Customers can choose to forgo desk phones entirely and simply use a softphone application on their smartphones and laptops.

Importantly, the UNUM platform was built with resiliency as one of its core components. The network was designed and built across multiple geographic locations spanning the U.S. and Europe. To achieve the same level of redundancy with an on-premise system, a business would need to expend a significant amount of capital.

Implementation of UNUM at SMUGGLER

When the time came to transition from the old system to the new, the cutover was seamless. Employees' phones were connected to the old phone system through Friday evening. When employees returned on Monday morning, their phones were configured and working on UNUM. Employees simply continued using their Cisco phones as they did before. Suzie explains that employees "had no idea that there was a new system in place because their experience was the same as it was before."

Of course, there were a few of the inevitable minor hiccups that follow any significant technology transition. But what stands out in Suzie's mind are not the minor hiccups, but the customer service MOHSO provided in responding to them.

Results

Suzie and SMUGGLER have been very happy with the UNUM system and MOHSO's implementation and support of it. After starting with UNUM, SMUGGLER was able to discontinue deprecated voice links and other related on-premise infrastructure, which resulted in a monthly net savings of almost $2,000.

The UNUM system has been especially useful to SMUGGLER during the COVID-19 pandemic, when employees are not in the office. Employees can make and receive business calls by connecting a desk phone at home or by using the soft phone application on their smartphones or laptops. SMUGGLER is also using the UNUM system to make sure that its business lines are always answered by a live and knowledgeable receptionist. Several employees have Cisco IP phones at their homes and take scheduled turns answering them. Suzie explains that, "We couldn't have handled this COVID situation without UNUM."

When asked if she would recommend UNUM to other businesses, Suzie's quick reply was "100%!" She further states that "With UNUM, you're getting a product based on Cisco technology backed by a company that offers outstanding customer support."

To learn more about UNUM's UCaaS platform, please visit our website www.mohso.com/unified-communication-service/ or reach out directly at hello@mohso.com or (888) 959 5220.

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