



Unified Communications With Cisco UCM Cloud

Rent-A-Center has been an Insight and Cisco client for several years, leveraging our partnership through several modernization initiatives, from data center architecture to networking solutions and more.

In 2018, the client began the process of transitioning to a colocation facility. This initiative included a major refresh leveraging Cisco® HyperFlex™ and was followed closely in 2019 by a major network refresh leveraging Cisco Meraki™. Throughout these major projects and subsequent committed support through network upgrades and re-architecture, as well as data center migrations, exceptional rapport developed between Insight and Cisco teams with Rent-A-Center's teams and key leadership.

Because of the trust built during our previous engagements, when Rent-A-Center decided in 2020 to reduce costs in its network and remove complexity from its communications systems by moving to the cloud, Insight and Cisco were selected despite competitively priced and timed solutions from our competitors.

As part of ongoing modernization initiatives, and to reduce the cost and complexity of its current communications solutions, Rent-A-Center wanted to unify and shift its communication applications off premises to the cloud across 3,500 locations, specifically through a partnership that could deliver unified cloud communications as a service.

In addition to removing cost and complexity from Rent-A-Center's communication systems, the client also intended to decommission one of its data centers to reduce its on-site footprint and eliminate the costs it would have incurred in ongoing maintenance and hardware refreshes. Eliminating the data center meant re-routing the voice traffic it previously hosted, either to another on-premises solution or to the cloud. Considering the company's preexisting efforts to get out of the data center business, making the switch to cloud-hosted communications was clearly the right fit.

Facts at a glance

Client industry:

Furniture and appliance rental

Size of company:

18,000 employees

Challenge:

As part of ongoing modernization initiatives, and to reduce the cost and complexity of its current communications solutions, Rent-A-Center wanted to unify and shift its communication applications off premises to the cloud across 3,500 locations, specifically through a partnership that could deliver unified cloud communications as a service.

Solution:

Insight, in partnership with Cisco, pioneered a new As a Service solution for Cisco UCM Cloud and rolled out UCM implementation, managed services and telco services for 2,200 brick and mortar stores and 1,300 Preferred Lease locations.

Results:

- Reduced data center footprint and IT burden.
- Created ongoing cost savings.
- Improved agility and reduced time to market.
- Enhanced operational efficiency.

Pioneering a solution powered by partnership

With the client specifically seeking an As a Service solution to remove internal administrative burden and reduce telco spending — within a tight deadline — Insight and Cisco partnered to pioneer the first instance of our Collaboration Services for Cisco Unified Communications Manager (UCM) Cloud. **With delivery, management and support from Insight, in partnership with Cisco, Rent-A-Center is now in possession of a new unified communications solution leveraging Cisco® components, including:**

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Expressway™
- Cisco 7800 & 8800 Series endpoints
- Cisco Unity® Connection
- Cisco Unified IM and Presence
- Cisco Webex® Room Kit
- Cisco Emergency Responder
- Cisco Jabber®
- Cisco Webex Desk Pro

Ongoing management and maintenance will be provided as a service from Insight billed per month.

The depth of Insight and Cisco's existing partnership, coupled with the exceptional technological skill and expertise of Insight's teams in managing the various client-side touchpoints, made this engagement an incredible example of collaboration and perseverance through complexity.

Cloud communications are an agile, cost-effective and modern method of unifying enterprise voice connectivity. But designing and deploying cloud communications systems while minimizing disruptions is a tall ask, especially during a pandemic. Having initiated the engagement during a critical time in the COVID-19 pandemic made on-site support impossible; zero-touch implementations would have to be performed by store personnel at each of the 3,500 store locations involved. This required intensive upfront logistical management, including ensuring accuracy of the client database, hardware provisioning and configuration, and overcoming shipping and delivery challenges.

Adding pressure to an already complex scenario was the timeframe: what was originally proposed as a four- to six-month project needed to be expedited for completion within 90 days to meet the client's year-end timeline.

The strategic cross-team partnerships we had already developed quickly overcame each of these hurdles.

Insight teams conducted store visits during the pre-sale process to help add critical context to our implementation process. Immediately after kickoff, several workshops were conducted with Insight, Cisco and Rent-A-Center teams to outline project requirements and parameters. Insight and Cisco immediately began work on a rollout methodology that wouldn't require on-site technicians, keeping installation costs low and maintaining compliance with COVID-19 restrictions. Insight teams created custom installation instructions and a step-by-step video to enable store managers to easily implement the new technology, and we were able to kit and ship complete implementation packages to each location.

Rent-A-Center now enjoys hands-off, reliable, cost-effective voice communications that simplify and streamline operations and improve the end-user experience.

Reducing complexity with cloud communications

Before making the switch to Cisco UCM Cloud, the client faced continual challenges with its disparate communications systems, often receiving calls from district managers and stores reporting that their phones were not working correctly, whether due to telco provider issues, network issues or other reasons. Not only did this create a strain on internal resources, it slowed operational efficiency and created cause for customer dissatisfaction.

Our services enabled Rent-A-Center to deploy Cisco UCM Cloud systems in an accelerated timeline with no disruption to business operations. Now, with one system for communications across all locations, and with centrally managed maintenance and ongoing support from Insight teams for the client's Cisco UCM Cloud environment, Rent-A-Center is continuing to grow its cloud environment gradually and sustainably while reducing costs and communications burdens on internal resources at every level.

Driving business benefits with deep collaboration

This inaugural engagement of Insight's Collaboration Services for Cisco UCM Cloud was made possible through Insight's long-standing partnership with Cisco, Cisco's flexibility in solution design and reliable client support throughout the process.

As a result of this engagement, Rent-A-Center now enjoys hands-off, reliable, cost-effective voice communications that simplify and streamline operations and improve the end-user experience, allowing the company to refocus internal resources on impactful business goals and continue expanding its cloud footprint with continuing adoption support through ongoing strategic partnership with Insight and Cisco.