burwood group, inc.

CASE STUDY

Collaboration Technology Strategy in a Demanding M&A Environment

A Global Food Service Distributor Makes M&A a Way of Life

The merger and acquisition process can produce a great deal of stress for corporations and their employees. From culture clashes to uncertainty about the future, employees and leaders going through M&A activity are often relieved when the dust has settled.

For one Midwest-based, global foodservice distributor, M&A activity is a way of life. As one of the largest private companies in the United States, much of their growth has come from mergers and acquisitions. What may be a tumultuous, one-time event for many corporations is their standard way of work.

One of the most important aspects of this ongoing technology integration process is maintaining a functional collaboration environment. Phones, messaging, call centers, and video technology are all critical to maintaining day-to-day operations and collaborating between the global distributor's corporate and branch locations.

Creating an Agile, Standards-Based Unified Communications Plan

The organization had previously purchased "off-the-rack" Cisco unified communications solutions, but this approach wasn't working for their complex and rapidly expanding infrastructure. They needed a consultative integration partner to improve the current system architecuture and processes. Their M&A activity created specific requirements:

- Integration timeline requirements varied widely depending on M&A terms, meaning a standardized yet flexible integration blueprint was critical
- Multiple vendors were involved in every step of the integration process, all with various dependencies on each other
- With each integration, the distributor wanted to make the overall collaboration architecture more and more efficient
- Maintaining employee connectivity throughout the merger was critical, not only for productivity but also for continued morale and collaboration

Burwood's relationship with the distribution firm began in 2010, helping with server and storage upgrades related to the M&A activity. Gradually, the client was exposed to Burwood's experienced unified communications team. What began as assisting during one merger turned into a programmatic approach to integrate and modernize the collaboration environment. Together, Burwood and the client team:

- Created a repeatable methodology and standard best practices for integrating acquired unified communications environments with the corporate infrastructure
- Established standardized onboarding processes for bringing newly-acquired sites online
- Designed and deployed net-new system expansion projects as needed

This standards-based, training-focused approach was just what the global distributor needed to integrate new sites in a streamlined, flexible manner.

BURWOOD SERVICES

Merger and Acquisition IT Strategy

Unified Communications Expertise

Program Management

End-User Training and Adoption

Smarter solutions.
Better outcomes.

Four Best Practices for Effective M&A Unified Communications Integrations

Burwood embarked on the several-year process of building a relationship with the client team and improving their collaboration environment and standards. They established the following best practices in process:

1. **Use each integration as an opportunity to improve the enterprise.** How does a new site turn-up affect call plans? What changes can we implement that will make the broader enterprise more efficient? The Burwood team asks probing questions at each integration, constantly looking for broad improvement opportunities. After each integration, Burwood captures lessons learned for the next turn-up.

   This historical knowledge has proved invaluable for each subsequent integration, especially when additional vendors are involved. Burwood's presence is a consistent thread through each integration, giving confidence to the Reyes team.

2. **Include the acquired corporation in the integration process and planning.** When a new business is acquired, Burwood meets with division leaders to share information about the distributor's corporate communications technologies, uncover concerns, and help manage the change.

   This approach helps to ease the stress and apprehension of acquired firms and impending technology changes. Rather than providing cookie-cutter solutions for each business group, the Burwood team customizes solutions for their specific needs, while ensuring that the solution works smoothly with the enterprise environment and strategy.

3. **Over-communicate and over-deliver, during and between integration projects.** Burwood distributes their cell numbers for easy communication, encouraging client stakeholders to text or call anytime. This responsiveness and white glove service goes a long way in their fast-paced culture. Project updates are frequent, and conveyed in clear, concise language. This enables everyone from engineers to the CIO to understand status, regardless of technical knowledge.

Intentional relationship-building between Burwood and client team members has been critical to the success of this long-term partnership. The Burwood team is personally invested in teaching them how to manage their growing and complex environment.

Post-integration, the Burwood team consistently checks in out outstanding issues. Helping to resolve any nagging concerns not only assists the client team, but gives Burwood a better understanding of lessons learned.

4. **Prioritize enablement of engineers and end users to ensure long-term adoption.** Burwood's working style with the distributor IT team is based on relationship-building, not project scope definitions. The Burwood team looks for opportunities to educate the engineers on the whys and hows of unified communication technologies and integration.

   Sometimes the Burwood team gets creative when they sense an opportunity for adding value. In a recent instance, end-user training was not part of the project scope, but the Burwood consultants sensed it would be a huge help to the client's corporate team. On a zero-dollar budget, the Burwood consultants recorded a series of Cisco WebEx training videos that were hugely appreciated by the system administrators and new end users.

"

Over the past decade, Burwood has provided not only technical expertise, but a highly responsive, consultative approach. Burwood Group has become a trusted partner in our growth, helping ensure smooth technology transitions in a challenging, fast-paced environment of continual change. They have enabled us to address our most urgent requirements, and to position our infrastructure for the future.

DIRECTOR, GLOBAL NETWORK ENGINEERING AND INFRASTRUCTURE
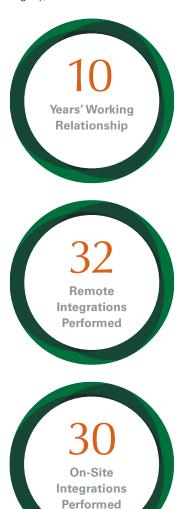GLOBAL FOODSERVICE DISTRIBUTOR

"

burwoodgroup, inc.

The Result: An Optimized Collaboration Infrastructure Positioned for Growth

Today, this global foodservice distributor is still engrossed in M&A activity. However, their collaboration integration approach is transformed through the work they've done with Burwood Group. The team has now built:

- An effective, reliable methodology for integrating new companies into the corporate collaboration infrastructure
- An excellent customer experience for their newly acquired companies' leaders and end users

Supported by Burwood's consultative approach, the client is now confident that their collaboration infrastructure can grow to support future M&A activity and enterprise goals. Burwood continues to support them with new site turn-ups and is excited to take on new strategic initiatives, including a new call center deployment in Canada.

Together, the joint Burwood-client team has built a 10-year relationship founded in trust, integrity, and hard work.

10
Years' Working Relationship

32
Remote Integrations Performed

30
On-Site Integrations Performed

Collaboration Technology

Burwood Group is a Cisco Master Collaboration Specialist, the highest professional services designation offered by Cisco in Unified Communications technology. Relying on this partnership and others, Burwood has implemented numerous collaboration technology solutions for this global foodservice distributor in their 10-year business relationship, including:

- Contact Center integrations including configuring and adding new agents and call flows
- VoIP upgrades and integrations including customization for various business units
- Video Conferencing (Cisco Telepresence)
- Consolidation of VoIP circuits
- Global-Scale Faxing Solution Deployments
- Attendant Console Solutions
- Voice Picking Systems
- Text-to-Speech and Translation

CISCO Partner

About Burwood Group

Burwood Group, Inc. is an IT consulting and integration firm. We help forward-thinking leaders design, use, and manage technology to transform their business and improve outcomes. Whether you are developing strategy, deploying technology, or managing your infrastructure, Burwood is a dedicated partner. Headquartered in Chicago since 1997, today Burwood comprises five U.S. locations including 24x7 operations centers in San Diego, CA and Normal, IL. To learn more, visit **burwood.com**.

Our Primary Markets

Burwood serves clients across the U.S. with six offices and two 24x7 operations centers. Our primary markets include:

Illinois (HQ)   North Carolina
California   South Carolina
Missouri

Contact Us

burwood.com/contact
info@burwood.com
877-BURWOOD
@burwoodgroup