



# From Pencils and Paper to Virtually Paperless

Customer Success Story: Tri-State Water Treatment, Inc.

## Tri-State Water Treatment's Business Communication System Pays Back Big Dividends Thanks to Cisco SMB Select Partner AOS Global

### Executive Summary

#### Customer Name

- Tri-State Water Treatment, Inc.

#### Industry

- Water and air treatment systems

#### Business Challenge

- Outdated network infrastructure, old phones, and a paper-and-pencil sales process with no marketing automation
- Cost of initial investment needed to be controlled and recouped through higher productivity and better management of sales

#### Network Solution

- Highly customized outbound call-center application using Cisco Call Manager with redundant Cisco 7825 Media Convergence Servers
- Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging software
- Custom XML application written by AOS Global Solutions
- CallRex call-recording software

#### Business Value

- Sales agents contact twice as many targeted sales leads and focus more on scripting and closing more sales
- The solution supports surveying, so set questions are asked to all sales leads and responses are entered right into the phone, allowing management to capture critical marketing data for sales planning
- Paper-based processes are reduced and in some cases eliminated

Tri-State Water Treatment, Inc. installs Rainsoft water and air treatment systems, and provides services to improve the quality of water and air in its customers' homes. Established in 1992, Tri-State Water opened its doors in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, with 11 employees. Two years later, Tri-State opened a second location in Fenton, Missouri. Today, Tri-State has about 65 full-time employees, and often brings on additional staff to handle outbound sales calls. Employees are licensed to sell and install water quality systems in Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

With no time to update many processes that had been in place since the company opened its doors, management was always struggling to keep up with company growth and, as a result, was fixing problems with patchwork solutions.

“We had an outdated network infrastructure, old phones, and literally a paper-and-pencil sales process,” says Josh Waller, IT director for Tri-State Water. “Sales leads were written on index cards, then passed on to telemarketing agents who had no computers. We were printing 300 to 400 pieces of paper every day that were useless within 24 hours and thrown away.”

Tri-State Water President Donny Beasley was fascinated with new technology and how it might improve sales and customer service, as well as streamline business processes. After meeting with several firms, Waller felt that Cisco Systems® partner company AOS Global Solutions, with its SMB Select designation and Gold Certified Partner status, was the right fit for Tri-State's needs.

“The company had experience putting in a lot of successful solutions,” Waller says. “It had a good knowledge of how to scale a small-business network infrastructure, but because we do significant sales and installations of water treatment systems on the scale of a large company, we wanted to work with someone who also understood bigger, enterprise solutions.”

AOS Global, which holds Cisco® specializations in IP Communications, Security, and Wireless, has real strength in developing total IT solutions. “Tri-State has some technology visionaries and knew what it wanted to accomplish,” says Matt Oliver, channel manager for AOS Global. “But management didn't know exactly what technology would help the company get there. That's our job. We had quite a few conversations and conducted demonstrations that showed Tri-State what we could do with application development on top of a Cisco Business Communications solution. Providing the company with this kind of information early on about what was possible gave administrators great confidence in our ability to deliver.”

### Spreadsheets Show Quick Return on Technology Investment

Waller admits that it took effort to convince management to invest in a Cisco solution, which was more expensive than some other solutions being considered.

“Any time a small business looks at spending more than U.S. \$100,000 on something, management is going to look at it very carefully,” Oliver says. “Tri-State Water had never invested this heavily in technology before. To demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the investment, we prepared spreadsheets to show management how quickly the money would be recouped through higher productivity and better management of sales. We showed a quick return on investment, and then it was an easy sell from there.”

The Cisco IP Communications solution was put in place six months later, in the first quarter of 2005. “Today, no one even thinks of the price,” Waller says. “I literally haven’t heard anyone mention the price of this phone system in months. It helped bring our business to a new level—that’s what people are talking about.”

Waller notes that savings can be realized in unexpected areas, such as calls to other branch offices.

“If you’re calling a branch office many times a day, we learned that it’s really cost-effective to call across a data connection,” he says. “We didn’t look at that closely at first, but Matt brought it to our attention and it’s huge. Now we can overhead page people or call through an extension. Not only is it more cost-effective, it really helps unify the company.”

### Cisco Business Communication Solutions and Custom Application Fuel Small-Business Growth

To improve communications, AOS Global Solutions recommended a Cisco IP Communications solution, including Cisco CallManager and Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging. But the essential part of the overall solution was AOS Global’s development of custom Extensible Markup Language (XML) applications that integrate with the Cisco solution to improve communication across the internal network and to customer prospects. By combining its own XML application with recording software, AOS Global

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created a highly customized outbound call-center application. The customization allowed new sales leads to be loaded weekly—or even daily—into the marketing department’s call center. As a result, a manager could easily assign any lead to any sales person on staff. The application also allows for surveying, so set questions are asked to all sales leads and the responses are entered right into the phone through the soft key buttons on the 7900 Series IP phones, and then tracked through a Structured Query Language database. The development of these applications reduced, and in some cases completely eliminated, the paper process. Now all sales leads are backed up on the network.

“Before the Cisco and AOS Global solution was put in, we were constantly shuffling index cards, and our sales agents spent most of their time just trying to get through to customers,” Waller says. “Now our agents are getting through to twice as many targeted sales leads, and they can focus more on their scripting and sales instead of dialing and trying to reach customers.” Seeing the technology pay such big dividends, both in cost-savings and improved productivity, is typical for the staff at AOS Global. By understanding the issues and concerns of small businesses, it has found real success in the SMB market.

This customer story is based on information provided by Tri-State Water Treatment, Inc. and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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