

## Sowing the seeds of collaboration



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### How Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated is improving the collective efficiency of its workforce.

The seed was planted 30,000 feet above ground. A dozen executives from Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated (CCBCC) had just flown to Mobile, Alabama, for a quick meeting with local sales reps. On the return flight to Charlotte, North Carolina, the company's vice president of sales mentioned how time-consuming and costly the trip had been for such a short meeting. Sitting next to him was Onyeka Nchege, CIO of CCBCC, who seized the opportunity to germinate an idea among his peers.

"If we had video conferencing," Nchege said mid-flight, "we could slash the time and cost of travel."

The seed has been growing ever since.

The nation's largest independent Coca-Cola bottler, CCBCC, makes, sells, and distributes \$1.4 billion in beverages each year. Through five production plants and 47 distribution centers, the company sells 14,700 cases every hour, or four cases per second.

"In such a high-volume business, efficiency is absolutely critical," says Nchege. "And efficiency starts with people."

CCBCC's workforce—its sales staff in particular—was relying heavily on email and in-person meetings to coordinate their efforts. According to Nchege, the former lacks the timeliness and intimacy of interpersonal

communication. And the latter is costly, especially when your business is spread across nine states and dozens of locations.

Nchege wanted a better way to disseminate information. He sought to reduce the company's dependence on in-person meetings. And he aspired to improve communication within the company, and with customers.

"With a solid network and technology infrastructure, we have a toolbox for collaboration," Nchege explains. "We just needed to add some tools, and leverage them in ways that enhance operational efficiency."

CCBCC had dabbled with collaboration technologies in the past. But they were largely one-off solutions based on situational requests, and were never used broadly or consistently.

"We needed a holistic collaboration strategy," says Nchege.

#### Identifying collaboration use cases

Because Cisco had helped CCBCC establish its technology infrastructure, Nchege figured the company could also help with its collaboration strategy and planning.

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"Cisco does more than networking," Nchege notes. "We asked them to help us with collaboration at a high level."

Cisco® Services did just that. The first step was working with CCBCC business groups—through workshops, surveys, and interviews—to understand their challenges and goals. Cisco Collaboration experts examined CCBCC's organizational structure, processes, and communication patterns. They analyzed how information is distributed, both internally and externally. And they identified a variety of opportunities for improving the company's communication and coordination.

"We never talked about products; we talked about capabilities," says Mark Eggleston, collaboration solutions architect and strategist for Cisco Services. "We fleshed out 10 use cases, and then prioritized them based on the anticipated business value and impact."

"Cisco gave us a number of ideas to consider," Nchege confirms. "This isn't our area of expertise, so we relied heavily on their knowledge and experience. It's great to have a partner that is always there, and always willing to bring business-level strategy and thought leadership to the table. We couldn't have done it on our own."

## Enabling sales efficiency with tablets and video

CCBCC is in the process of implementing its holistic collaboration plan, starting with the highest value use cases. The company is utilizing immersive video conferencing and tablet devices to improve the efficiency of its sales force.

"Sales enablement has been a priority," says Nchege. "Our sales executives, regional sales managers, and sales reps are spread out across a wide area, but we're bringing them closer together with video and tablets."

Video conferencing systems have been installed at CCBCC's corporate headquarters as well as seven regional sales and manufacturing hubs. Sales teams use them daily for planning, forecasting, and other activities, and supply chain teams use them to coordinate operations across multiple locations.

"Adoption has been excellent," Nchege reveals. "If you look at our video conferencing schedule, it's filled every day. Our teams are working together more effectively, and we've greatly reduced the cost of travel."

CCBCC has also armed its salespeople with tablet devices that contain a sophisticated business intelligence dashboard and video collaboration capabilities. Sales executives can push relevant information to the reps at any time, and reps use the tablets to interface with their managers, their customers, and the company's operations personnel.

"In the past, our sales reps would take a massive binder to a customer meeting, containing pages and pages of product details and forms," Nchege recalls. "Now they have everything at their fingertips, from sales tools to real-time inventory details to customers' purchasing history."

CCBCC plans to extend its video conferencing and mobility capabilities in the coming months, and will also explore digital signage and social collaboration platforms. They will do so with the help and guidance of a trusted advisor.

"I consider Cisco Services an extension of my team," says Nchege. "I'm very grateful for their partnership."

## Collaboration assessment

To sign up for a complimentary collaboration assessment, subject to qualification, and to download resources on collaboration, visit:

<http://UnleashingIT.com/rsrc19.aspx>.

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