Network Switching Solutions

Customer Profile:

THE FULCRUM GROUP
One Technology Solution: Yours

David Johnson and Steve Meek founded The Fulcrum Group in 2002 to provide networking, security and voice-enabled technology solutions for organizations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The company also services markets outside of Texas, to provide specialized and personal on-site support for remote branch offices. The Fulcrum team features seasoned technology professionals with a keen understanding of telecom and IT challenges. In 2007, The Fulcrum Group was selected by its primary distributor for membership in the exclusive VentureTech Network Program, a North American organization of independent professional IT firms who focus on small to midsize businesses (defined as less than 1,000 users).

"With the D-Link network equipment, we can usually bid 50% less than we were bidding with the previous vendor, sometimes even less."

David Johnson
Vice President, The Fulcrum Group

D-Link® Partner The Fulcrum Group Designs Custom, Low-Cost IP-PBX Solutions for Small Businesses with D-Link Switches

The Challenge

The Fulcrum Group offers VoIP IP-PBX solutions to small businesses. Three years ago, they were using network equipment from a D-Link® competitor, but costs were becoming more and more of an issue. "That company makes a great switch, but it's not very cost effective," said David Johnson, vice president of The Fulcrum Group. "So we started looking at other solutions."

Typical Fulcrum Group customers are looking to lower their costs or they have a system that needs to be retired. "We look at what they're spending on their current phone system," explained Johnson. "We'll look at what they're paying for a maintenance plan for their current PBX. And we'll look at what they're paying for their voice and Internet services, from AT&T or Verizon or whoever the carrier might be. We'll consider all those costs, and then we'll see if there are ways we can shave some money off of those expenses. If we can save enough, we can fund a complete, brand new IP-PBX network infrastructure."

The key is to offer the customer a solution that has the right feature set, superior reliability, and ease of use. "We can't compromise on quality of service (QoS), latency or any of those kind of things when bidding jobs," said Johnson.

Fulcrum provides a wide range of VoIP equipment to meet customer requirements– everything from handsets to switches. "We deliver a complete solution that includes IP PBX equipment, all the phones, the switching components and all the labor necessary to implement the solution. The big challenge is submitting bids that are unbeatable in terms of price and performance."

The Solution

Johnson and his team looked at several competitive network switch vendors before settling on D-Link. Initially, the Fulcrum Group purchased two DGS-3100-48P Managed 48-Port Gigabit Stackable PoE Layer 2 Switches and two DWS-3227P 24-Port Gigabit Unified Wireless Switches with PoE + 10 Gigabit Uplinks. (D-Link has since retired the 3227P, replacing it with the DWS-3024 Managed 24-Port Gigabit L2+ Unified Wireless PoE Switch in the product line.) The company designs custom switching configurations to meet customer demands and specific needs. These are two of the switches they recommend for small business VoIP implementations.
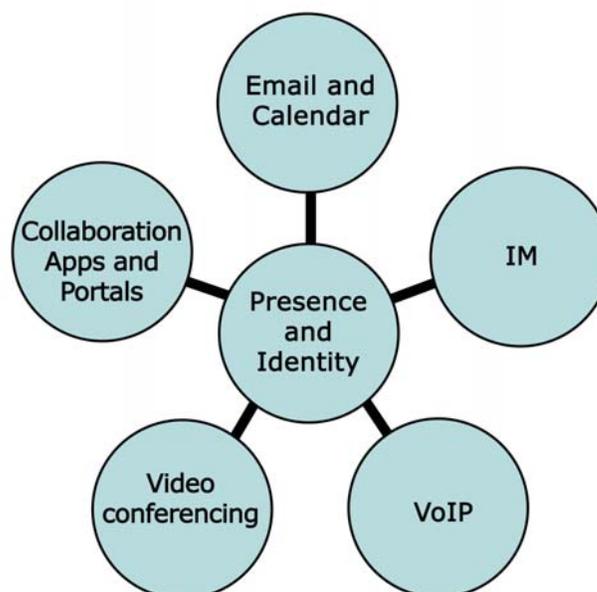
D-Link's switching solutions help The Fulcrum Group's customers enjoy innovative features of "unified communications," like "find and follow," presence aware application integration, IM and chat integration, availability and calendar integration, and unified messaging.

Network Switching Solutions

DWS-3227P - xStack® Managed 24-Port Stackable PoE Gigabit Wireless Switch, 10AP License

- Wireless switching for seamless roaming and centralized AP management

- 24 10/100/1000 Port 802.3af PoE with 4 combo SFP in 1RU Chassis

- (1) Built-in XFP interface and (2) Optional 10-Gigabit Stacking/Uplinks

- Preconfigured ACLs protect against Trojans, Worms, and more

- Includes license for support of up to 10 Wireless APs

DGS-3100-48P- xStack® Managed 24-Port Stackable PoE Gigabit Wireless Switch, 10AP License

- Enhanced Features Including ACLs, RADIUS Authentication, IP-MAC Binding, Guest VLANs, 802.3af PoE Capabilities, and Stacking Up to 6 Units

- Brings Advanced Enterprise Network Management Features to a Cost-Effective Level

- Support Standards-Based Management Protocols Including SNMP, RMON, Telnet, a Web-Based GUI, and SSH/SSL

Fulcrum Group's customers are very satisfied with their solutions. "We always get really positive feedback," said Johnson. "The installations go flawlessly, absolutely perfect – no problems whatsoever."

Their customers enjoy all the newest, innovative features of "unified communications," like "find and follow," presence aware application integration, IM and chat integration, availability and calendar integration, and unified messaging. Unified messaging sends all voicemails, email, faxes and other communications to one inbox (usually a client application like Outlook). Their clients can open voicemails on their computers, and the equipment even turns off message waiting lights on the handsets.

The solutions Fulcrum Group offers also integrate easily with third party applications like Salesforce. com. "When a call comes in, the system automatically generates a customer 'call-in' record in their contact info, then a pop-up dialog box appears, showing the salesperson relevant notes and customer service history," explained Johnson. "There are lots of really great things you can do with these systems."

Experience and Planning Pay Off
For projects like these, Johnson recommends paying particular attention to planning and network design to handle QoS issues. "You're putting voice and data on the same network," he explained. "You've got to have the quality of service nailed down." He also recommends using a security layer between the data and voice networks. "Even though they're physically located on the same network switch, the voice network shouldn't be able to see the data network and vice versa, except for specific devices. We typically recommend separating out your networks on different VLANs for voice and data, and then creating access control lists to limit which devices can see which networks."

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