



3Com Switches on Florida PR Firm

When the Moore family decided to grow its Tallahassee, Fla.-based public relations firm, it determined that staying on top of advanced technology would become its competitive advantage.

In the public eye, this meant delving into the rapidly exploding world of social media, with podcasts, webinars, blogging, and e-newsletters. But Moore Consulting (www.moore-pr.com) also realized its behind-the-scenes infrastructure had to keep pace.

"We don't want to be the biggest firm out there, but we did need to do the same things the big boys do, and deliver them quicker and faster," says the eponymous Richard Moore, the agency's Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel.

The family business was used to organic growth. Started as a one-person firm 15 years ago, Moore Consulting had blossomed to more than 20 employees who occupied an 8,000-square-foot suite in a Tallahassee office park. Nationally ranked as one of the top 110 PR firms by *PRWeek*, the agency's client roster includes the American Cancer Society, several industry associations, major pharmaceutical companies, and workforce development firms.

The time was ripe for a more structured strategic growth plan. So in 2003, Moore devised a five-year plan to upgrade the agency's internal and external communications.

Moore identified a variety of needs. Many of the agency's early efforts at connectivity involved small-office equipment purchased at consumer electronics stores like Circuit City. The WLAN the agency tried to set up on its own was simply not robust enough, with faltering coverage and dead spots.

On top of an aging traditional phone system, Moore Consulting had a 3Com 10/100 network in place, which was becoming burdened with the high volume of large files created with the firm's design applications.

"Although we had installed a server in 2005, that was when we decided our Ethernet-based switches needed a Gigabit core," says Moore.

Moore Consulting needed to support its creative process with massive amounts of server bandwidth for Web hosting and shared documents, many of them pipe-clogging multimedia presentations, and other PR collateral.

For travel, Moore Consulting needed a secure VPN and unified messaging while visiting clients around the country, as well as a secure wireless network blasting through its headquarters. The network equipment itself had to age gracefully, sustaining itself over seven or more years, and be able to upgrade to VoIP

when the technology matured.

Besides longevity, the wireless network had to possess a certain first impression "wow factor" for visiting tech-savvy clients, allowing them to log in and move freely about Moore's home office.

So Moore turned to Sean Johnson, the Business Development Manager at another Tallahassee-based company, Hayes Computer Systems (www.hcs.net). With his company already being a 3COM Gold Partner, Johnson suggested 3Com's Unified Wired and Wireless Gigabit Switch and 3Com managed access points.

"The plan was a phased approach, and that the right gear would grow along with the company," says Johnson. "We took care of the pressing issues of security, an upgraded backbone, and wireless."

Hayes staged the 3Com gear at its headquarters, configuring the device before bringing it over to the PR firm's offices.

"We installed the Gigabit Switch and access points late one afternoon in 2006 and did a quick training session with the Moore staff through an easy Web page tutorial, all on the same day," says Johnson, adding that the entire on-site process took between three to five hours and switched over seamlessly.

After a full site survey, Hayes also deployed two 3Com 7760 Access Points to provide wireless coverage across Moore Consulting's entire office.

Moore Consulting resides in a one-story 8,000-square-foot space in an office park. Not only did the 802.11 wireless cover the client showcase boardroom and multiple conference rooms, it also provided connectivity to a daycare center and an outdoor recreation deck. (The wireless currently supports flavors a., b., and g.)

While he is not certain about a return on investment, Moore says the wireless is a major human-resource benefit. Now employees can drop their children off in the kids room and allow them to do their homework online. Employees can also sit with their laptops outside on nice days and work securely under the trees, protected by WPA2 and AES encryption.

Moore says the 3Com server functionality also forwards e-mail messages to the senior management team's PDAs, including Blackberries and Trios.

Moore says the voice-over-network phase is slated for 2008 because the 3Com switch has available ports and power for up to any combination of 24 access points or phones.

"I don't think we've had a single problem since we've installed this," says Moore. "We haven't had a single outage." **▼**

Greg Tally can be reached at gtally@vonmag.com.