Consolidated Customer Success:

CUSTOMER: Cerasis

LOCATION: Eagan, MN

CONSOLIDATED SOLUTIONS:
- ProConnect Unified Communications with about 200 seats
- Dedicated Internet Access
- MPLS across 5 sites

RESULTS:
- In less than a week, 90% of employees were working from home
- Employees could make and take calls and collaborate using online tools remotely—with minimal IT intervention

Cloud-First Readiness Meant Business as Usual when **90% of Employees** Switched to Remote Working

Consolidated® communications

CONNECTING **YOU** BETTER

Cloud-First Readiness

From snowstorms to hurricanes to tornadoes, Cerasis has smartly prepared for myriad disasters that could potentially strike its offices in Minnesota, Texas and Oklahoma. Now, add a global pandemic to the list.

When COVID-19 demanded that nearly the entire company work remotely, Cerasis was as ready as it could be.

The company uses data and technology to help shippers drive efficiencies, gain visibility and support growth. To keep customers shipping, and protect the supply chain, Cerasis has to be there for them no matter what. Fortunately, the company has moved much of its infrastructure to the cloud in recent years. And their weekly meetings routinely include disaster recovery (DR) readiness.

"We had already talked about all the different scenarios," says Darwin Porter, manager of IT systems. "With a cloud-first strategy, we were ready."

Ready for Remote Working

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, only about five percent of the company's employees – across five locations – already worked from home. With stay-at-home orders sweeping America, the rest of the company had to shift to remote work immediately.

The IT team felt the pressure to equip at-home employees with all the resources for business as usual. Fortunately, they were well-prepared.

"We'd already had the conversations and the framework was in place, so it was not a huge leap to make the remote transition," Porter says.

For years, Cerasis has relied on Consolidation Communications for dedicated Internet access. As the company has expanded, it connected its five sites via Multiprotocol Label Switching, or MPLS.

More recently, Cerasis switched from an on-site Private Branch Exchange (PBX) system to Consolidated's Unified Communications (UC) solution called ProConnect. The centrally managed voice solution cuts capital expenditures and maintenance time for the IT team. It also comes with enhanced messaging and the much-needed flexibility and scalability that the pandemic demanded.

"We liked the idea of the plug-and-play functionality of cloud-based voice service, and the flexibility of it," Porter says.

Staying Connected to Colleagues, Customers

With the infrastructure already in place, Consolidated simply had to activate more licenses and educate the new at-home users. The call center previously used ProConnect with its advanced collaboration features daily, but others had not. ProConnect offers integrated HD audio and video, messaging, screen sharing, file sharing and conferencing available on PCs, browsers, tablets and mobile phones.

With the quick shift to remote working, employees took advantage of multiple options for placing and receiving calls: forwarding to their cell phones; using the ProConnect UC-One app on their mobile devices; or via the softphone on their laptops and desktops.

Porter was relieved that employees could easily log into theConsolidated Communications portal on their own – without requiring IT assistance.

With COVID-19, the IT team and call center could also easily change the recorded message to update inbound callers about virus-related business changes. For example, they asked customers to email instead of call.

They also adjusted call trees on the fly. "With our previous phone system, it wasn't that easy to make changes to call trees," Porter says.

"Having the ability to do those things made a night and day difference," Porter says.

90% at Home – in Under a Week

Cerasis's cloud-first strategy paid off when unprecedented times called for unusual measures. Ninety percent of the workforce went remote in less than a week – maintaining business continuity for the company and its customers.

Customers could rely on Cerasis to keep them operating during a time when it was essential to keep shipping, and the supply chain, moving.

"We had a disaster recovery plan in place before the pandemic and we were able to put it in motion quickly," Porter says. We are about 90 percent remote now and one of the reasons is unified communications and ProConnect. I really appreciate the work Consolidated Communications has put into their systems to make this possible."

Ready to connect better?

Visit **www.consolidated.com** or call **844.YOUR.CCI**.

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