



Excel Telecommunications Answers the Call for State-of-the-Art Networking with NHR's Pre-Owned Gear and NetSure Maintenance Offering

Excel Telecommunications Inc. is one of the nation's largest independent providers of next-generation and traditional communications products and services. Focused on delivering the best customer service for its customers, resellers and distribution channels, the Irving, Texas-based company provides long distance, international, local and pre-paid telephone services nationwide.

According to Jim Connolly, senior network manager for Excel, the service provider maintains the nation's largest Feature Group D network, which enables customers to choose their long distance network and use the same number of digits no matter which carrier they use. Excel provides best-in-class services thanks to a core network of equipment from Cisco and Juniper that is distributed across 11 switching centers throughout the country.

The Challenge

Over the years, Excel invested heavily in Cisco and Juniper to power its expanding network, which includes a number of Cisco Catalyst Series 6500 switches as well as Veraz Networks' ControlSwitch IP-based soft-switch platform. At the same time, the company invested in Cisco's SMARTnet support and maintenance offering to protect its investment in core equipment and have access to expedited technical support when necessary.

Unfortunately, Excel often found that its need for network expansion or equipment support occurred with extremely short notice, making it exceedingly difficult for the OEM to respond within the necessary timeframe. "Like many companies, we keep our competitive edge sharp by being able to react quickly in all kinds of situations," explains Connolly. "So it's not uncommon for the need to buy additional equipment to appear with little warning. The same can be said for maintenance issues, as they always surface on their own schedule—and typically at the worst time."

"NHR has earned my loyalty on both equipment procurement and maintenance coverage. We haven't purchased pre-owned equipment from anywhere but NHR for almost two years now. There's no reason to look elsewhere. NHR's prices, product availability and responsive support are unbeatable."

Jim Connolly
Manager, IP Network Services
Excel Telecommunications

The Solution

In 2006, when several replacement network elements from both Cisco and Juniper were needed in a hurry, a trusted vendor suggested looking beyond the OEMs to get the rapid response necessary to avert potential network downtime. So instead of making two calls, Connolly made one call to Network Hardware Resale, the world's leading provider of pre-owned networking equipment. He soon found that not only did NHR have the equipment he needed in stock, they could be delivered overnight—a huge difference over the typical wait of weeks when dealing with OEMs.

So when the time came for Excel to upgrade its network by deploying additional Cisco Catalyst Series 6500 switches at several locations, Connolly again called upon NHR. Taking advantage of the fact that NHR keeps a wide variety of equipment from many of the leading network equipment manufacturers in inventory, Excel also purchased a Juniper J-series services router at the same time. "Being able to get Cisco and Juniper equipment from the same source and not have to wait weeks was a huge plus," Connolly recalls. "On top of the immediate response, though, the prices savings were impressive."

During that purchase, Excel also was introduced to NetSure, NHR's alternative hardware maintenance program that specifically provides protection for previous-generation and end-of-life equipment at costs that are substantially less than Cisco's SMARTnet offering. "Frankly, we'd had to cut back on some of our SMARTnet maintenance because Cisco's pricing had gotten so expensive," Connolly explains. "We could not afford the level of coverage we needed, so I'd alerted management that we were at risk but until NetSure, we had not seen an alternative that was attractively priced."

Excel immediately signed up for NetSure coverage, considering it a bonus that the offering would cover both Cisco and Juniper equipment—even if the gear was not originally purchased from NHR. The move was fortunately timed as soon after Excel experienced an issue with a card in one of its switches. So NHR was alerted right away and one of the NetSure technicians logged into Excel's network over a secure VPN connection to run some diagnostics. When the cause of the problem could not be unconditionally determined, NHR responded by shipping overnight both a replacement card and a chassis. "While it turns out that the card was the problem, we were very impressed by NHR's show of extra care and attention," says Connolly.

The Benefits

NHR continues to play an integral role in Excel's network as the service provider now relies upon pre-owned gear for even the most crucial portions of its network. When Excel expanded its network in Dallas, for instance, the upgrade included delivery of nine Cisco Catalyst Series 6500 switches. Despite the size of the order, NHR came through in several days. "Fast turnaround is crucial for us," Connolly says. "The faster we get what we need, the faster we can put the products in our

production network. That means no bandwidth limitations for our customers, which makes everyone happy.”

Excel also greatly appreciated that, unlike when buying from OEMs, purchases from NHR not only arrive quickly but also are fully assembled and ready to be put into the production network. “NHR sends equipment that is fully configured and tested,” Connolly explains. “This saves us invaluable time, especially as we often are in a rush to get equipment in and operational.”

When upgrading its network, Excel also found that NHR was an unexpected source of new equipment. “We needed Cisco ASA 5500 Series adaptive security appliances, which are a fairly new product,” Connolly says. “I mentioned it to my NHR rep and he was able to get 15 of them for us at unbeatable prices—all in a four-day turnaround.” That meant faster network set-up, which really relieved the pressure.”

Excel still has SMARTnet coverage on two Catalyst 6500 switches but when it runs out, they will be put on NetSure with everything else. Overall, Connolly estimates that NetSure has enabled Excel to realize a 60 percent total savings over comparable SMARTnet coverage.

NetSure currently covers all of Excel’s Cisco 7200 Series routers as well as several Cisco 7206VXR routers and Juniper M-series routers at switch sites. Following a current upgrade to gigabit networking, Excel will take advantage of NHR’s asset recovery capabilities by trading in all its Juniper modules in exchange for credit on additional Catalyst 6500 purchases.

According to Connolly, Excel has purchased almost \$750,000 of equipment from NHR over the past two years, with \$100,000 more in outstanding purchase orders expected before year-end. The total savings from purchasing top-quality, like-new network equipment from NHR currently exceeds \$750,000. “Telecommunications is a very competitive business,” he says. “We’ve never had any issues with the gear we’ve purchased from NHR while the savings lets us do more for our customers.”

Excel enjoys even greater responsiveness since NHR opened a facility outside of Dallas in September 2008, about five minutes from Excel’s headquarters. Local support has enabled 90-minute turnaround on some recent hardware acquisitions while increasing peace of mind for Excel’s network operations staff.

“NHR has earned my loyalty on both equipment procurement and maintenance coverage,” concludes Connolly. “We haven’t purchased pre-owned equipment from anywhere but NHR for almost two years now. There’s no reason to look elsewhere. NHR’s prices, product availability and responsive support are unbeatable.”

Solution Snapshot

Customer: Excel Telecommunications, www.excel.com

Challenges:

- Cisco and Juniper could not deliver needed replacement and expansion gear on a short timetable.
- Soaring cost of Cisco's SMARTnet maintenance resulted in leaving certain network elements unprotected.

Solution:

- Pre-owned networking equipment from Network Hardware Resale, along with the company's NetSure maintenance and support program.

Benefits:

- One-stop shopping for both Cisco and Juniper equipment as well as maintenance.
- Overnight delivery of hardware enables Excel to maintain optimal network uptime and expedite ongoing expansions.
- Total savings in pre-owned gear purchases exceeds \$750,000 when compared to OEM list prices.
- Cost of yearly maintenance has been reduced by 60 percent.

About Network Hardware Resale

Network Hardware Resale (NHR) is a leading provider of pre-owned Cisco, Extreme and Juniper networking equipment. The company also is an authorized reseller of resilient, massively scalable networking gear from Force10 Networks. Founded in 1986, the Santa Barbara, Calif.-based organization has been recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of America's fastest-growing private companies and honored by VARBusiness magazine as one of North America's top technology integrators. NHR provides global sales and network support services from its locations in the United States, Asia and Europe. More than 10,000 organizations worldwide purchase quality networking equipment from NHR, including Global 1000 companies, small and mid-sized enterprises, government entities, educational institutions, healthcare organizations and telecommunications service providers. For more information, visit www.networkhardware.com.



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