



Nalco Company

From its inception in 1928 to today, Nalco Company has grown from an upstart water treatment business to a leading provider of integrated water treatment and process improvement services, chemicals, and equipment programs for industrial and institutional applications.

Nalco Company is one of the largest specialty chemical companies in the world, with 10,500 employees and 70,000 customers in 139 countries. Its products and programs are used in a wide variety of industries, including aerospace and aviation, cosmetics, education, electronics, government, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and transportation.

To maintain its leading edge and boost productivity, Nalco Company periodically invests in the best technologies for its employees.

Objective.

About two-thirds of Nalco Company's employees—roughly 6,500—are salespeople. Members of Nalco Company's sales force rarely work from an office, and they spend the majority of their time traveling to client sites.

"While out on the road, our sales team called in service orders to an administrative assistant," says Judy Bochenek, telecommunications analyst at Nalco Company. Before the arrival of wireless, this process was necessary, but inefficient and prone to errors and delays. It also contributed to the sales team having to face hours of paperwork during the evening—when they wanted to be with their families. As Nalco Company began implementing a company-wide, always-connected initiative, the IT group realized the sales process was ready for an overhaul.

Broadband connectivity would alleviate the sales team's difficulties—and give them access to real-time pricing. Nalco Company prices are based on fluctuating market rates for certain chemicals or a barrel of crude oil. Having Internet access to these prices allows the sales force to give clients accurate quotes. "Our price books can change on the spot. With a real-time broadband solution, sales can get the most up-to-date pricing," Bochenek says.

Establishing a wireless connection, however, tested the sales team's patience. During the initial mobility rollout, the team relied on the built-in wireless capabilities of their notebooks. The plan was for the team to use Wi-Fi or dial-up connections to place orders, access corporate applications, and connect to the Internet. Nalco Company's mandatory security policy for a locked-down notebook made connecting difficult, and it often led to a call to the help desk.

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Company Description:

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Objectives:

- Implement an always-connected business initiative.
- Give mobile sales force anytime, anywhere access to corporate network resources.
- Provide simplified connectivity that doesn't require a lot of technical knowledge.

“Our notebooks are in lock-down mode to prevent viruses and protect the company’s intellectual property,” says Keith Bale, IT enterprise architect at Nalco Company. “Also, we have stringent firewall requirements, and some end users weren’t able to make changes on their own to get on a Wi-Fi network.”

Nalco Company even documented the sales team’s struggles. “We did a survey of users and had data showing that they were challenged to connect outside of their own homes,” Bale says. “The Wi-Fi and hotel setups are horrendous, and with locked-down notebooks, they couldn’t make driver or modem changes on their own.”

Given the situation, Nalco Company began looking for a new way to offer wireless connectivity to its remote workers.

Solution.

Nalco Company selected Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband service, so that the sales force could have anytime, anywhere access to corporate resources. Verizon Wireless won the contract because it was willing to customize the provisioning and configuration process for Nalco Company’s locked-down computers.

“We would not have been able to do this project without Verizon Wireless,” says Bale. “They were the only provider willing to work with us and make the necessary changes. Most wireless operators do not understand the security issues that enterprises face. Verizon Wireless listened to our security needs and made adjustments to their provisioning and support processes.”

Each notebook includes a PCMCIA PC Card that features a durable, high-performance internal antenna design, as well as an external antenna connector to help boost the signal and improve connectivity. These designs give users average download speeds of 600 to 700 Kbps and are capable of reaching 3.1 Mbps.

The PC Cards operate over the Verizon Wireless EV-DO network, which offers Nalco Company’s employees connectivity throughout most of the United States. “We liked that the EV-DO network is so expansive. Other providers are lagging in their high-speed broadband rollouts,” says Bale.

Results.

Nalco Company began reaping the benefits of having a mobile workforce almost immediately. “Introducing the PC Card was painless, as the learning curve was not very steep for users,” says Bale. “End users simply pop in the card, and they are up and running.”

“Verizon Wireless agreed to take out the install CD, and we created basic installation documents tailored to a locked-down notebook. It was important to have the CD removed because most end users take out the CD and pop in the PC Card and try to boot it up. When the process failed, they would call the help desk, incurring costs,” says Bale.

Solution:

- Verizon Wireless PC5750 PC Cards allow mobile workers to have high-speed network access.
- PC Cards operate over Verizon Wireless EV-DO network.

Results:

- Help desk calls regarding connectivity have gone from an average of 200 a month, down to less than 10, saving more than \$3,500 per month.
- PC Cards have paid for themselves in about a month, compared to paying the daily costs of Wi-Fi connectivity for mobile workers.
- Sales members are able to complete more customer visits.
- Employees are happier with their work-life balance because they can accomplish more during the workday.
- Verizon Wireless has helped Nalco Company conduct a pilot program in Europe that will



Before using Verizon Wireless and its products and services, the sales team called the help desk an average of about 200 times each month with connectivity problems. The calls were expensive—about \$20 or \$25 per incident. Since introducing the PC Cards, Nalco Company has cut that number down to about 10 calls a month, saving more than \$3,500 each month. Nalco Company also eliminated the Wi-Fi costs that the sales team accrued. Considering that Wi-Fi connectivity costs about \$6 to \$10 a day, Nalco Company covered the costs of the PC Cards within only a month.

In terms of productivity, sales people are saving significant amounts of time because they can quickly place orders without having to phone them in. Plus, they are also spending much less time dealing with connectivity issues. Because of the time savings, the sales team is able to visit more customers. A big bonus for the sales force is a much better work-life balance. Previously, the staff was doing paperwork well past 5:00 PM. “They did not like doing paperwork during their downtime,” Bale says. “Now they can complete their orders in the field, and they have significantly decreased the amount of work they take home.”

The changes are improving employee satisfaction. “This technology has improved morale and enabled our sales force to better meet the needs of our customers,” says Bale.

Nalco Company has been very happy with how Verizon Wireless responded during the entire deployment process. “If they were not willing to customize their provisioning and support processes, we would not have been able to complete this project,” Bale says. “They were the only carrier that was willing to do this for us, and because Vodafone owns 40% of Verizon Wireless, they have helped open conversations in Europe.”

In fact, Nalco Company has concluded a pilot program in Europe and is about to deploy 200 PC Cards in the United Kingdom. “From a global standpoint and working through a locked-down notebook, we have a well-documented process that we can use when we go to other parts of the world. Verizon Wireless has been instrumental in getting us to that point,” says Bale.

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KEITH BALE
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