

IT JUST WORKS: MOONEE VALLEY CITY COUNCIL'S ToIP REVOLUTION

Melbourne, 15 August 2003: When 80 per cent of communication between a Council and its ratepayers takes place over the phone, an efficient, reliable and cost-effective telephone system is critical.

For metropolitan Melbourne's Moonee Valley City Council, the challenge was clear: how to efficiently and effectively service customer enquiries (over 112,000 residents in Moonee Valley) by updating an antiquated telephone system, utilising existing infrastructure and keeping expenditure of valuable ratepayer dollars to a minimum.

What the Council needed was a telephony solution that improved customer service and provided a measurable return on investment by linking 350 employees across seven sites onto the one data and voice network.

And that's where Tiecom with partners NEC Business Solutions, Hewlett-Packard Australia and Performance Solutions came to the fore.

"Our existing telephone system was 15 years old, outdated and expensive to maintain," says Maureen Trezise, Manager Information Services, Moonee Valley City Council.

"We were hamstrung by a system that had reached maximum capacity and realised that to expand the existing telephone network to meet future organisational and customer service needs, was going to be a very costly exercise for Council."

So following twelve months of research and planning, Moonee Valley became the first City Council in Melbourne to switch to networked telephony – a solution which carries data, video and voice traffic simultaneously on the one network. The new system, supplied by Tiecom, comprises an NEC Enterprise Communication Platform (ECP), network infrastructure from Hewlett-Packard Australia (HP) and Performance Solutions software. The network utilises NEXTEP Broadband technology.

The system took two weeks to install across all seven sites. During installation, any interruption to incoming telephone services to the Call Centre was limited to just two hours.

"What initially impressed me about this offering was that we could combine the NEC ToIP (telephony over internet protocol) technology with our existing HP infrastructure, greatly reducing our infrastructure costs," says Trezise.

"We didn't have to totally replace our system in order to upgrade our technology."

Ease of operation was also an important factor for the Council when making the decision on the new solution.

Says Trezise: "The system is fully integrated into Microsoft Outlook. Most people are familiar with Outlook and email – and this is just an easy extension of that."

The solution also allows the Council to:

- move voice calls over the same network as the data systems
- easily relocate employees as personal details and internal extension numbers travel with the staff member to the new location – the telephone is simply plugged into any PC/data point
- deliver computer operated voice mail, call forwarding and direct internal dialling
- significantly reduce phone maintenance charges and line fees by enabling internal calls between sites.

The Council has already begun to experience immediate benefits and savings after implementing the system.

"Essentially we now have state of the art technology for no extra cost," says Trezise.

"In addition to switching to a cheaper carrier service, we calculated the ongoing costs of phone rental, maintenance charges, on-hold messaging, adding or moving an employee, and the frequent external calls to other Council sites, and realised our savings would be substantial."

"As a result, the system is already paying for itself."

Paul Nettelbeck, Marketing Manager Data Solutions for NECBS, says Tiecom's unique approach to servicing customers, solving business problems and protecting the customer's valuable technology infrastructure investments was critical to ensuring the customer's satisfaction.

"It's a simple customer philosophy: Tiecom listen, engage and make it happen and it works," says Nettelbeck.

Customers want 'value add' propositions from their technology vendors that deliver immediate returns on investment. In conjunction with their partners, NEC Business Solutions, HP and Performance Solutions, Tiecom have done just that.

According to Trezise, the Council's system upgrade has also produced some unexpected benefits.

"Heightened employee morale was a very welcome by-product of networking the seven Council sites," she says.

"Now each staff member has an extension number and feels very much a part of the Council, rather than working off-site in isolation."

"This system has exceeded all our expectations: communication in all areas of the Council has been streamlined; it has obvious customer service benefits; and we can prove return on investment to our community."

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PROBLEM

Link 350 employees located across seven council sites onto one voice and data network with no capital investment. Key objective of improving customer service to ratepayers.

PROCESS

Twelve-month Council planning and research process, close vendor/customer liaison, innovative problem solving ensuring smooth implementation and limited downtime.

SOLUTION

A system, from Tiecom, comprising an NEC ECP and network infrastructure from Hewlett-Packard Australia. The Vision software from Performance Solutions provides a graphical interface to the ECP and Outlook. The network utilises NEXTEP Broadband (DSL) technology.

The system was installed across all seven sites in two weeks. During the installation process, incoming calls (to the Call Centre only) were interrupted for two hours.

All staff were trained on the use of the handsets, the Vision software and setting up of the voicemail system.

About Tiecom

Tiecom Pty Ltd is a leading provider of end-to-end voice, data and video solutions for business and government. The company utilises its expertise in IP Telephony, Contact Centres and Managed Services, and strong partnerships with other leading companies to provide innovative and affordable business solutions.