



Industry: Retail

Installation: 3 locations, 6 ShoreGear voice switches, ShorePhone telephones

Competition: Cisco and Nortel

Date of Install: May 2004

Challenge:

C.M. Almy was looking to replace its PBX-based telephone system with a VoIP system that would provide ease of use, ease of management, and powerful features to improve employee productivity, customer service and satisfaction.

Solution:

ShoreTel provided the retailer with a complete VoIP solution, including ShoreGear voice switches and ShorePhone IP telephones.

Benefits:

- ShoreTel Contact Center improves customer service and satisfaction by providing powerful call-handling features for call center operators and performance information for supervisors.
- C.M. Almy can manage the system in-house, saving time and money.
- The retailer now has a unified presence to the outside, with one telephone number for the entire organization.
- Toll charges are avoided with least-cost routing capabilities.

LEADING RELIGIOUS PRODUCT RETAILER CHOOSES SHORETEL

ShoreTel VoIP Solution Improves Catalog Sales Call Center Operations and Simplifies Phone System Management

C.M. Almy & Son, Inc. was founded in New York City in 1892 by English master tailor, Charles Mortimer Almy and his son, James. Now with headquarters based in Greenwich, Connecticut, the mission and values of four generations, which now is run by brothers Stephen and Michael Fendler, endure: C.M. Almy is dedicated to being the world's best supplier of decorative furnishings, apparel, worship-related products and gifts to churches, religious institutions, their clergy and members.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

In early 2004, C.M. Almy had separate Nortel PBX phone systems for its Pittsfield, Maine and Greenwich and Old Greenwich, Connecticut locations, which meant that each location had different telephone numbers, as opposed to one general number for the entire company. At the time, the lease on the Nortel system was due for renewal so the company decided to look at alternative solutions and determined that it would deploy Voice over IP (VoIP). This narrowed the choice down to solutions from Cisco, Nortel, and ShoreTel.

C.M. Almy evaluated each vendor's system, placing priority on solution flexibility, ease of implementation, and the ability to utilize analog telephones until budget would allow them to be replaced with VoIP phones, where the VoIP phones made sense. C.M. Almy also needed a system that would support and even improve the operations of its busy catalog sales call center. After viewing demonstrations and speaking with customer references for each vendor, the retailer chose ShoreTel for its comprehensive and cost-effective solution.

"The other solutions would have required that we swap out all our phones to either VoIP phones or a different model of proprietary phone than what we had already, which would have been extremely costly," said Jim Johnston, Manager of Information Technology with C.M. Almy. "ShoreTel's system supported a greater variety of phones than the other vendors. ShoreTel is flexible enough that we can use our analog phones and add VoIP telephones as we're able, which was more cost-effective than the other solutions."

SEAMLESS DEPLOYMENT

ShoreTel, with the help of its integration partner, provided C.M. Almy with six ShoreGear-120/24 voice switches for its three locations, and the connection between the sites is now over a virtual private network (VPN), as opposed to the previous frame relay network. The company has an old ShoreTel ShoreGear-Teleworker switch, which accepts four analog devices and blasts out IP over a 10BaseT connection to a companion DSL modem. As for telephones, C.M. Almy has about a half-dozen ShorePhone IP telephones and is able to utilize analog phones with the ShoreTel system until it decides to swap them out for IP phones. Finally, there are approximately five



to 10 cell phones tied into the system, which provides even further mobility for employees. The deployment, which was planned in phases to avoid downtime, took two weeks and the cutover from analog to VoIP was seamless.

IMPROVED CALL CENTER

C.M. Almy has a call center dedicated to catalog orders, which generates the largest portion of their sales revenue. With ShoreTel Contact Center, call center employees are armed with key information and control, enabling a significantly higher level of personalized attention for callers. For example, before even answering an incoming call, a call-routing log displays the caller's experience within the system to a call center operator so he or she has the information necessary to make the caller's experience as pleasant as possible.

ShoreTel Contact Center also provides advanced real-time management and historical measurement tools that enable C.M. Almy supervisors to ensure agents are delivering consistent service. Performance and statistical information lets C.M. Almy know how the center is performing and what needs to be done for further improvement.

"Contact Center is helping us determine how we will evolve our call center," said Johnston. "ShoreTel generates information that helps us determine how we can improve the balance of the calls into the call center. We are looking at dividing calls by information as specific as area codes and Contact Center makes that possible."

The catalog sales call center is divided up into two queues based on what callers are ordering, either stock items or custom-ordered products. ShoreTel's ShoreWare Auto-Attendant provides the 24-hour automated call answering information and outgoing prompts, which can be customized and linked to the time of day and/or day of week. Individual groups can also have their own menus with unique greetings and options.

EASE OF MANAGEMENT

ShoreTel's ShoreWare Director is a browser-based management interface that provides C.M. Almy with easy access to the system from anywhere on the network, enabling the management of every site, including voice mail, automated attendant and desktop applications. It takes mere seconds to add a new user and the system automatically updates the centralized database and every voice switch. At the time the new user is added, a mailbox is automatically created, the automated attendant dial-by-name and number feature is updated, and online directories are revised.

In addition to the ease of adding new users, the ShoreTel system is simple and cost-effective to maintain. "ShoreTel is fast and easy, and this is true for all aspects of the system, from installation to moves, adds, and changes," said Johnston. "We didn't have to bring in an expert to manage the phone system—with general networking experience, it's easy to handle. Before, the telephone system had its own group to manage it. Now it's part of the IT infrastructure and we're able to make changes as quickly and easily as we can make changes to our network."

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With ShoreWare Personal Call Manager integrated with Microsoft Outlook, employees can quickly type in a name, bring up a number, and make calls from local online directories—all with the click of a mouse, right from the desktop. In addition, Call Manager indicates to an employee if the person they intend to call or transfer an incoming call to is already on the phone before they dial, saving time invested in making calls.

With ShoreTel's e-mail integration, employees can manage their e-mail and voice mail activity centrally and efficiently right from their desktop. Voice mail messages are stored in the industry-standard WAV Audio for Windows format, allowing users to play them on multimedia PCs, attach them to email messages or embed them in other documents. The ability of the ShoreTel system to track phone calls, export and distribute original voice mail messages to one person or a group of people and keep a running history of calls into each number is helpful in continually monitoring and improving customer service.

"We really like the ability of the ShoreTel system to integrate voice mail with Outlook, which is something the other vendors couldn't do easily," said Johnston. "Personal Call Manager is such a powerful tool—employees are managing their e-mail and calls more efficiently and they have better control of their phones."

PRODUCTIVITY BOOST, COST SAVINGS

ShoreTel phone systems are easy to use, simple to manage, flexible, and reliable. With the ShoreTel system in place, all 145 C.M. Almy employees are now on the same phone and voice mail system, using 4-digit dialing to reach employees at either location and even dialing co-workers by name. Callers no longer need to dial different numbers for the Maine or Connecticut offices—they dial one number and the automated attendant directs them to the right place.

ShoreTel's least-call routing capabilities also allow C.M. Almy to minimize costs by avoiding toll charges. For instance, if an employee at the Maine location calls a supplier in Connecticut, the call is routed through the company's data lines, through the Greenwich, Connecticut branch, and out to the customer, bypassing toll charges.

ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

C.M. Almy is investigating Customer Relationship Management and plans to integrate the ShoreTel system into the CRM solution they choose, which will give employees even more robust information on callers before picking up the phone. Integration with CRM will provide screen pop-ups with detailed customer information, which will maximize sales and enhance the customer's experience.

"ShoreTel delivered exactly what we expected to get out of a VoIP system—powerful features, full system control, in-depth call history information, and ease of use," said Johnston. "Going forward, we anticipate even more benefits. Everybody is impressed with the system and it's making life a lot easier for everyone. It's providing essential information we need to constantly make changes for business improvement and we look forward to enjoying the system even more as we utilize all of its capabilities."

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