SHORETEL DISPLACES CISCO VOIP SYSTEM AT PREMIERWEST BANK

Key Challenges

- Fast-growing community bank in Oregon and Northern California
- Removed Cisco VoIP system after a year plagued by quality and operational problems
- Deployed ShoreTel's IP PBX to all 40 of its branches, serving more than 300 employees

Benefits

- Saving significantly on annual telecom costs with a speedy 2.4 year payback
- Least-cost routing saves $2,000 per month
- Excellent voice quality and high reliability
- Can manage the VoIP network, from Oregon to California, from any location
- IT can make adds, moves and changes in minutes

"The simplicity of ShoreTel's management is drastic"

Cameron Frasnelly
Network Manager
PremierWest Bank

The value of a single phone system was clear to PremierWest Bank, a fast-growing community bank in Oregon and Northern California. "We had a mishmash of different phone systems at our branches," says Cameron Frasnelly, Network Manager at PremierWest Bank. A single dial plan across PremierWest's 40 branches reduces costs and increases employee productivity and customer usability. Having a single phone system that IT can manage itself improves customer service and eliminates reliance on costly systems integrators.

PremierWest Bank initially signed on with Cisco for VoIP, but it endured a year plagued by poor voice quality, increased costs and rampant technical problems. "It was a nightmare," says Frasnelly.

PremierWest Bank is rolling out ShoreTel's IP PBX to all 40 of its branches, serving more than 300 employees. The bank expects substantial telecom savings resulting in a speedy 2.4 year payback.

CISCO: COMPLEX AND COSTLY

Frasnelly recites a laundry list of problems with Cisco's VoIP phone system, based on AVVID. "Complexity was the number one nightmare – on top of the high cost and a poor use of our WAN resources," Frasnelly says.

Cisco's AVVID was close to double the anticipated cost and the phone system wasn't manageable. "Even from the get-go we had problems," Frasnelly says. Cisco shipped the wrong equipment for the initial installation. Least-cost routing was so complex that it took a week to set up. Once up and running, more problems loomed. PremierWest's IT managers, systems integrators and even Cisco technicians couldn't resolve the problems.

"Quality was terrible. Echo was a constant problem," Frasnelly says. Now picture the PremierWest CEO and CFO calling in from cell phones to pick up their voicemail, and Frasnelly's problems become very clear.

With a centralized architecture, Cisco CallManager handles every call, incoming or outbound. "When CallManager locked, we would have to reboot and hope for the best," says Frasnelly. Customer service, loan officers, financial advisors and branch managers – everyone was impacted.

Nor did Cisco use WAN bandwidth efficiently. Music-on-hold and voicemail were streamed across PremierWest's entire multi-state WAN. "Our pipes are valuable. It doesn't make sense to have them soaked with music-on-hold and voicemail."

AVVID's reporting was arcane and required importing into complex spreadsheets to determine simple facts like what times calls took place. When the IT team performed routine vulnerability scans against CallManager, it would die. Disaster recovery capabilities were weak.

RE-EVALUATING THE SHORT LIST

After a year-long effort to resolve the insidious problems, PremierWest Bank decided to re-evaluate its phone system. The bank compared ShoreTel, 3Com and Mitel VoIP systems, examining the systems' price and functionality to determine the best value. Not willing to be burned again, "we went through the evaluation process for several months, comparing and comparing," says Frasnelly.

Then came the hands-on tests, but without the vendors' hands-on techs. PremierWest invited the top contenders, ShoreTel and Mitel, to send evaluation units but asked them not to send technicians. After the Cisco experience, a major requirement was the ability to manage the phone system without having to rely on vendors or systems integrators.

Two hours after Frasnelly and his team opened up the ShoreTel box, they were placing local calls. A few hours later, least-cost routing was running over ShoreTel switches located 80 miles apart. "We hadn't done a lick of telco training and we were up and running," says Frasnelly.

PremierWest also went hands-on with Mitel, but it had concerns about the impact of system complexity on reliability and available rack space in the branches' server rooms. Mitel had a multi-box solution that would require the PremierWest IT team to reconfigure the server racks at several branches. Plus the Mitel technician (who came with the box despite the forewarnings otherwise), had difficulty getting dial-tone without calling tech support.

SHORETEL: SIMPLE AND COST-EFFECTIVE

As disappointed as Frasnelly was about Cisco's undelivered promises, he's thoroughly pleased with ShoreTel's results. Least-cost routing will conservatively save PremierWest Bank $2,000 per month when fully deployed. It will save $1,000 a month alone by publishing a single number for voice and fax for all branches, and then using fax redirection to redirect the fax, so they can disconnect existing lines that are dedicated to fax machines.

ShoreTel

Voice quality is excellent. Bank employees find ShoreTel's Call Manager software intuitive and easy to use. "It really makes a difference to not have to remember a phone number. It's really handy," says Frasnelly. Bank employees can simply dial by name, instead of having to look up phone numbers.

Distributed Architecture: ShoreTel technology's distributed architecture is at the core of delivering a highly reliable, easily managed phone system. Almost all call control intelligence is distributed to the ShoreGear switches, so no single point of failure exists and high system availability is ensured. The ShoreTel architecture distributes voice applications, such as voicemail and automated attendant, to the servers at the locations, rather than centralizing applications at the network core.

Find-me Capabilities: The powerful "find-me" features in the ShoreTel Call Manager let mobile workers at PremierWest Bank move among branches without missing important calls.

If a bank employee is not present on the network when a call comes in, the ShoreTel IP PBX can search for him in other offices. As the call is sent to the employee's remote phone, he receives Caller ID information, so he can decide whether to accept the call or send it to voicemail.

If the employee is not reachable, the caller is sent to the person's corporate voicemail, not to their cell phone or other voicemail box. Later, when bank employees return missed calls, they can return the call or send a voicemail with just the touch of a few buttons.

ShoreTel systems are integrated with Microsoft® Outlook, so employees can use their personal information to manage how and when their callers are handled. If a call coincides with a meeting, the caller can be redirected to voicemail or to a colleague.

Intuitive Management from Anywhere: "The simplicity of ShoreTel systems management is drastic," says Frasnelly. The PremierWest IT team can configure phones from any computer with a browser, even if the phone is in Northern California and the ShoreWare server is in Oregon. With such intuitive management, Frasnelly has seen a decrease by one service call per week at the branches.

Adds, moves and changes take five minutes. "We were constantly being dinged by our oddball phone systems. It would take a long time to change an extension or a voicemail password. ShoreTel is really easy," Frasnelly says.

With ShoreWare Director, IT managers gain a single web-based manager for all voice applications across all sites. It enables IT managers to use a graphical interface to monitor all functions of ShoreTel systems and to gain a single system view from anywhere. No longer do you have to individually manage PBXs in different locations.