SOUTHERN POLYTECHNIC STATE AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS BEST PRACTICES AWARD FOR SHORETEL IMPLEMENTATION

SPSU Costs Reduced, Productivity Boosted, Student Services Improved

Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU), founded in 1948, is a residential, co-educational member of the very progressive University System of Georgia and has earned an exceptional academic reputation. Located in the historic and vibrant city of Marietta, just 20 minutes from downtown Atlanta, SPSU has approximately 4,000 students from 35 states and 82 countries.

GEORGIA'S "TECHNOLOGY U" INVESTIGATES VOIP

In late 2002, SPSU's Centrex telephone system and the services provided by the Georgia Technology Authority were proving to be very costly. The service was also substandard and the phone system itself was outdated, so SPSU began its search for a new solution. Upon further investigation, the University decided to implement Voice over IP (VoIP) in order to capitalize on the cost savings and ease of use features of the technology. This led the organization to look at VoIP solutions from 3Com, Avaya, Nortel, and ShoreTel during the evaluation process.
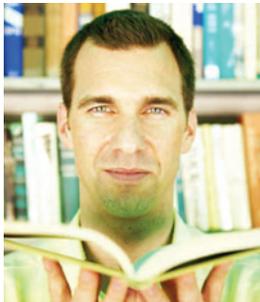
"When we decided to go with VoIP, we looked at a lot of vendors, including ShoreTel, and our top priority was reliability," said Bill Gruszka, CIO at SPSU. "We also wanted to be able to phase the new system in easily, utilizing the existing analog phones."

Upon close inspection of the solutions and after speaking with numerous customers, SPSU decided on ShoreTel for the reliability, seamless integration, lower cost of ownership, and management simplicity.

"SPSU is known as Georgia's technology university—where we develop minds to serve the real world," said Gruszka. "ShoreTel fits perfectly into this mission. We won a Board of Regents Best Practices Award for Information Technology with this ShoreTel implementation. It was a clear choice at the beginning, and daily we see more and more benefits derived from the new ShoreTel VoIP system."

PHASED APPROACH MINIMIZES DOWNTIME AND COSTS

ShoreTel provided the University with ShoreGear voice switches and collaborated with the University on the configuration and deployment. The deployment happened in stages, with 150 phones deployed during the

Challenge:

SPSU's telephone system was outdated and could not keep up with growth, and service was substandard.

Solution:

The University decided to implement ShoreTel Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions in order to capitalize on the cost savings, productivity, and ease of use features.

Benefits:

- SPSU realizes quick return on investment with ShoreTel.
- SPSU saves $202,500 per year.
- User productivity and student services improved.

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first phase, and growth to 1,200 stations over the next 18 months. The length of integration was defined by SPSU and is further evidence of the flexibility of the ShoreTel design. "Being able to operate seamlessly in a hybrid environment was critical to our operations," Gruszka said. "This flexibility is something we have come to expect and appreciate from ShoreTel."

"We did a phased implementation so that we had no downtime and the changes were seamless," said Gruszka. "The first departments to get the new gear were the busiest departments—student services and financial aid. The positive feedback from those departments fueled faster expansion to the rest of the departments, and everybody was asking when they'd get their new ShoreTel phones."

The University is capitalizing on ShoreTel Call Manager, as well as Voice Mail, Workgroup and Softphone capabilities. ShoreTel Call Manager is a powerful, all-purpose tool that allows SPSU employees to manage their voice communications quickly and easily from their desktop. With ShoreTel Personal Call Manager, SPSU faculty and staff members can quickly browse contacts and make calls from local directories or from Microsoft Outlook.

ShoreTel's Workgroups is designed specifically for operational efficiency, and with it SPSU is able to consolidate all its calls to one number and calls are then routed to the next available call center staff member. Workgroups also provide SPSU with basic reporting capabilities to help the University measure call volume and make work schedule changes as necessary.

"The Workgroup features have improved our telephone response time considerably in the Financial Aid Office, the Finance Office, the Admissions Office and the Registrars Office," said Gruszka. "By using the on-site administration, call answering points may be added to any of these groups 'on the fly' when incoming call traffic demands it."

SHORETEL SOLUTION PROVIDES QUICK ROI

The deployment of the ShoreTel system, which happened gradually in order to continue normal university operations, has saved the University money already. The deployment costs were completely recovered within the very first year.

"The savings we realize every year with the ShoreTel system—which we estimate at $202,000 per year—are even more than the one-time implementation cost," said Gruszka. "That includes the operational costs savings because we can manage it ourselves rather than paying someone to come in and do it for us. The ShoreTel system also allowed for a staggered implementation, which was important to us since we did not want any downtime at all. ShoreTel accommodated all of our deployment requirements and came in at a great price, which is always a consideration for educational institutions."

MANAGEMENT COSTS REDUCED

From anywhere on the network, an IT administrator can launch a Web browser and gain access to ShoreWare Director, ShoreTel's browser-based management interface. Through this browser, every site and feature can be

managed, including the PBX, voice mail, automated attendant and desktop applications. When a new user is added, the centralized database is automatically updated and every voice switch is notified. In addition, after the user information is entered, a mailbox is created, and the automated attendant dial-by-name and number feature and online directories are all updated within seconds.

"The day-to-day management of the ShoreTel phone system is simple—my administrative assistant handles everything," said Gruszka. "We're able to do moves, adds, and changes ourselves—on the fly and without any downtime. And users can make personal changes, such as voice mail messages and Follow Me Find Me commands, without ever having to ask anybody in IT. ShoreTel has simplified everything for us."

USER PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCED

The ShoreTel system provides integrated messaging, such as directory dialing, contact screen pop, caller ID, call waiting, and calendar integration. In addition, ShoreTel's powerful Follow Me Find Me feature allows employees to configure the system so that people calling in can track them down on any phone number they choose—for instance, on their cell phone or another office phone. Follow Me Find Me also allows voice mails to be sent as attachments directly to SPSU employees' e-mail boxes so nobody's question or issue will ever get lost in the system.

"ShoreTel allows us to provide better service to our faculty and staff, and also our students," said Gruszka. "Our users have a more robust system than ever before. There is no comparison to the old system which is why our users forced expansion by clamoring for the new ShoreTel phone."

In addition to powerful user features, ShoreTel's Call Control software is distributed to every voice switch, which eliminates any single point of failure in the system. In the unlikely event of a ShoreGear voice switch failure, other switches on the network will automatically take on the call-processing load so no call into SPSU is ever dropped.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVED

In addition to making telephone users more productive, the ShoreTel system includes many advanced features for groups with a high volume of incoming calls or whose usage increases at various times during the academic year. Implementation of these features has allowed SPSU to replace its auto-answering system with a Campus Switchboard answered by live attendants, which had been too cost prohibitive in the past.

"The bottom line is that this project uses technology to solve real-world problems, which is an exact match with our mission at the university," said Gruszka. "We greatly appreciate the cost savings, simplicity, reliability, and vast feature set we get with ShoreTel and look forward to continuing to work with the company during our growth."

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