

WOODS EQUIPMENT BRANCHES OUT TO VOIP



Needing to update legacy telecom switches and centralize management, Woods Equipment turned to the ShoreTel VoIP solution for its functionality and ease of use. – By Susan Biagi

With a legacy telecom system nearing the end of its lease, Jim Reeves, the general manager of IT at Woods Equipment Company, needed to upgrade and update his voice system. While reviewing his telecom options, he temporarily transferred equipment from another site, but “it was way too much power for what was in the office,” he says.

Woods Equipment, based in Oregon, IL, manufactures attachments and replacement parts for agriculture, landscape and light construction industries. The company has 1,100 employees in 14 sites coast-to-coast, but its telecom system was inconsistent.

“We had no central management of the phone system, which the CEO wanted,” Reeves says. He started looking at a traditional telephone system and a VoIP system. “I didn’t think I could afford an IP phone system,” he says. Not so. ShoreTel costs were similar to a standard telecom offering, and the ease of use and added functionality were key selling points for Reeves.

“I would go to the ShoreTel meetings and think, this is way too easy. It just can’t be this simple,” Reeves says. He met with other vendors, including Cisco. “They were too expensive, and I would need a Cisco engineer tethered to the building to manage it,” he says. Cisco also required that Woods purchase a small switch, and then replace it with larger capacity one as more users came online.

EASY TO INSTALL, EASY TO USE

The ShoreTel system’s flexibility, ease of installation, and feature set—specifically the Microsoft Outlook integration—sold Reeves on the ShoreTel solution. The first system was installed at Woods’ office and warehouse in Rockford, IL. The Rockford installation supports 23 employees with the ShoreGear 24 switch, ShoreGear-T1 and IP 100 phones.

“When we decided to put the ShoreTel system in, we gave ourselves three days. It took three hours. Our ShoreTel rep did a lot up front, but it was so simple—and it continues to be simple,” Reeves says.

About a year later, Woods’ office in La Mirada, CA, needed to replace a 1990 Nortel Networks Meridian switch. Reeves didn’t hesitate to install the ShoreTel system. Completed in June 2004, the 25 users in the La Mirada office make calls using the ShoreGear-120/24 switch, a ShoreGear-T1 gateway and IP 530 phones. Both locations use the Call Manager, Call Monitor and Soft Phone features. In addition, Woods now has integrated telephony because the Rockford system drives the La Mirada devices.

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Reeves also has installed the ShoreTel VoIP system in a small warehouse in Cleveland—"we did it ourselves," he says—and in December, he will replace the existing phone system in Woods' Gardner, MA, plant.

The VoIP system in Rockford has already met the ROI, Reeves notes. "I was paying over \$30,000 per year on the old Avaya system. The new system paid for itself in just over a year," he says.

NO-HASSLE MANAGEMENT

Users are pleased with the system, too. "Everyone who touches the Call Manager likes the links to Outlook—from the CEO down," Reeves says. "It's wonderful to have contact information pop up on the screen when someone calls us. The ability to listen to voicemail over the PC is nice, but the ability to forward those messages throughout our e-mail system is invaluable."

The simplicity of making moves, adds, and changes saves time and money. Prior to the ShoreTel system, Woods had to call a third party for assistance, which introduced a time lag. "The ShoreWare Director is a wonderful time-saver. You can add a person in 30 seconds, depending on how fast you type," Reeves says.

Being able to make changes internally has saved Woods about \$10,000 per year for the La Mirada site and \$3,000 in outside labor charges in Rockford.

Reeves is ready to rollout the ShoreTel system in all Woods' locations, including the company's two call centers. His goal is to convert the whole enterprise in less than two years. "As we open new warehouses, we'll put the ShoreTel system in by default. We'll change over the other locations as well," he says.

The simplicity of the ShoreTel installation still impresses Reeves. "I'm a computer guy and phone systems are a totally different language," he says. "ShoreTel has taken the mystique out of VoIP; anybody can install it."

Susan Biagi is a freelance writer based in Park Ridge, IL. She has been following the telecom industry and channel for more than a decade.

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