In the network, even your desk phone gets to be a smart phone.
Overview

As cell phones evolved to smart phones, traditional voice communications “at your desk” are undergoing a comparable transformation. The convergence of voice and data onto a single network promises a range of new applications that can fundamentally change how you communicate and exchange important information in near real-time.

In agencies today, the task of managing multiple communications streams can be daunting. Emails, voice mails, faxes, texts, instant messaging and wireless calls compete for your attention. Critical communication devices don’t work together for you – instead you have to work harder to keep up with all of them.

Governments are experiencing the tightest budget constraints in over a generation - driving the need for efficiency like never before. Yet citizen demand for services is at an all-time high, requiring increased collaboration to improve service delivery. The following use cases demonstrate how the transformation of voice can enable agency collaboration to better serve constituents, manage costs to meet budgets and leverage existing infrastructure by integrating newer technologies.
Community Development Agency

*Improve customer service and administrative flexibility*

**Responding More Quickly to Citizens in Need**

A West Coast community agency with a mission to empower and assist disadvantaged people in finding housing needed a better way for its 650 employees to serve its citizens. The agency phone system was so old that parts and service were no longer accessible. The agency sought a reliable solution that would be easy to maintain internally. It also wanted a flexible dial plan that would support five-digit in-house calling and help the agency reduce its telecommunications costs.

Money is always tight for nonprofit organizations, even for this community agency with a budget of $500 million. It focused most of its resources on building better neighborhoods, so every technology purchase was made with care. The phone system had no auto attendant, which meant that receptionists fielded hundreds of calls every day and many callers faced long wait times. When it became necessary to replace the legacy system, the agency saw an opportunity to create value for its employees and the citizens it serves.

**A Clearer Community Focus**

The agency replaced PRIs and POTS lines with AT&T Voice DNA, a hosted, network-based VoIP solution that provides the reliability and functionality the agency needed to better serve its communities. Calls are now easily distributed by zip code, so callers are connected much more quickly to the person who can best help them. Wait time has been cut dramatically and receptionists have more time to perform other important duties. Staff at all agency sites can collaborate much more easily now thanks to five-digit dialing.

Purchasing the system under a state contract made the solution more affordable. Because Voice DNA is a hosted system, the agency could make the solution an operating expense, part of its regular monthly IT budget, rather than a capital expense. Leveraging the flexibility provided by AT&T Capital Services made it easy to purchase the necessary phones and hardware.

Almost immediately the agency saw a 30 percent savings in local and long distance costs. IT officials also like the administrative flexibility, as they can manage the entire system in house. The IT department increased internal customer satisfaction since it can quickly respond to employee requests to add, move or change a phone line. It’s also easy to change the automatic call distribution (ACD) whenever the need arises, and users are happy with newly available features like conferencing.

**The Takeaway**

Voice DNA is an excellent solution for small to medium size municipalities and agencies that want the control and flexibility of managing their own communication systems. The solid, reliable automatic call distribution system makes it easy for agencies to replace aging legacy switches.
County Public Safety and Public Works
Encourage collaboration, simplify network management

Costs Spiraled as County Struggled with Disparate Phone Systems

County government plays an important role in the daily lives of many small town residents. In one large southern county, citizens depend on the county to handle public safety, public works, the judicial system, and community recreation, among other functions. Each department was responsible for purchasing its own equipment, so there was little standardization — county IT specialists found themselves maintaining a number of widely disparate phone systems and supporting computers using a variety of Internet Service Providers.

Costs soared as the county fought to manage the different systems and ensure that IT employees had the skill sets to maintain them; a few departments even hired their own IT personnel to keep systems up and working. The phone systems at more than one location were in such dire shape that they were on the brink of failure. Call volumes at some sites were so high that several departments operated their own contact centers. Managers found it difficult to support the large number of phones used by 4,000 county workers in more than 100 locations. Because these were legacy systems, many departments lacked even basic features like conferencing.

Out of Many, One
An incoming CIO determined that the county could increase efficiency, cut costs and serve its citizens and employees better with a Voice over IP solution. Today, with an AT&T IP network solution in place, a single contact center can serve a number of departments. Phones now provide sophisticated feature sets to make it easier for staff to complete their jobs. For example, internal staff can quickly access reports that Fire and Health Inspectors transmit from the field in near real time. The Department of Public Works can more efficiently support field workers responding to a water break by supplying them with critical information such as maps and records to speed resolution. For IT staff and administrators, it’s easy to add new lines or move them, along with contacts and other data, as employees change offices.

The Takeaway
Replacing incongruent phone systems has simplified management processes for the county, enabling it to consolidate IT staff into a single department that serves all employees. The solution provides better, more reliable service and advanced features that have made it easier for employees to collaborate. While cost savings are still being calculated and quantified, the county is confident that the solution has already saved both time and taxpayer dollars while increasing ease of use for citizens.

Metropolitan Law Enforcement
Support effective police protection in the face of shrinking budgets

Rising Crime Rates and Falling Tax Revenues

Government officials in a north central U.S. city faced chronic problems with their communications network. As each city department added additional telephone lines, the assigned cost was distributed to budget, not the originating agency. As a result, officials had no mechanism to track which phone numbers were assigned to specific employees and departments. In addition, each police precinct had its own PBX and PRI service, which drove up the overall costs. This complicated system created call routing and management problems and made it difficult for the city IT Department to manage the system in place.

City officials also grappled with challenges common in the nation’s rustbelt — aging infrastructure, significant population loss and declining tax revenues. The city lost more than 40 percent of its population in a single decade, which left thousands of abandoned homes that attracted criminal activity. Even as the crime rate rose, the lost tax revenue forced the city to slash budgets. Officials worked to discover new ways to support effective police protection and maintain other vital city services.

Significant Savings, Simplified Management

AT&T IP Flexible Reach helped the city gain control of its communication services. Police were initially skeptical because so many of their calls required immediate attention, but the outstanding backup capabilities of IP Flexible Reach and the success other city departments had with the solution won them over. The SIP trunking service enables 300 concurrent calls to the police department. A critical function like failover capability is not cost effective in a traditional voice network, but IP-enablement delivers superior redundancy. The IP Flexible Reach reporting functions make it much easier to analyze costs and determine where further savings are possible.

The Takeaway
Reliable, redundant and cost-effective IP solutions saved this city at least 20 percent of its communications costs, solving some of the largest IT challenges facing municipal governments today.
Managing Call Spikes and Containing Costs
The lottery commission of one southern state has generated $2.4 billion in state revenues since its introduction 20 years ago. More than half of lottery sales are reserved for prize expenses and by law the lottery has to return 35 percent of its proceeds to the state. The remaining revenues, which constitute the lottery’s operating budget, are therefore very tight. Officials wanted to find a way to manage communication expenses, especially when it came to the toll-free numbers that players called regularly to check for winning numbers.

More than a dozen lottery phone lines handled hundreds of calls daily, a number that spiked into the thousands when lottery jackpots grew larger. When its long distance contract expired, the lottery sought to contain costs on its outbound long distance and inbound toll-free calls, even in the face of increasing call volumes.

An Instant Winner
The suggestion of AT&T IP Toll Free Long Distance Services with two T1 MIS access circuits was just the ticket for the lottery commission. The solution gave the lottery additional capacity, enabling it to process larger call volumes to meet players’ needs quickly even during the exceptionally large calling volumes that occur when multimillion dollar prizes are at stake.

Although the lottery commission had not considered an IP solution, they followed the recommendation of their account team in seeking innovative ways to handle these challenges. Switching to AT&T IP Toll Free Services created an immediate 10 percent reduction in costs, increased call handling volumes and faster processing of simultaneous calls.

The Takeaway
Implementation of toll-free Voice over IP did more than save money and add call capacity – this solution enabled lottery officials to view AT&T as a company looking out for their best interests rather than as a vendor working to make the biggest sale.
County Health Department
Perform critical functions from the field

Keeping Up with Health Inspectors on the Go
Health department workers in a primarily rural Midwest county used an assortment of old PBX and Centrex phone systems to stay in touch with one another, their constituents and their counterparts in other agencies. When the department prepared to move to a new location, officials began to look at ways to improve workers’ ability to stay connected. They wondered whether Voice over IP could provide advanced features such as single number reach and unified messaging not available on the department’s current phones.

Officials understood that VoIP can generate significant cost savings, but worried that the county didn’t have the staff to maintain advanced IP telephony. They were also concerned about managing the system’s security and, like most government entities, they were expected to accomplish their goals with severely limited budgets.

Unified Messaging Multiplies Productivity
Hosted Voice over IP gives the county health department workers vastly enhanced functionality, making it easier for case workers to do their work wherever the job takes them, whether at their desks or out in the field. Employees appreciate features like find me/follow me that make it easier for their clients and colleagues to reach them. Unified messaging capabilities enable mobile county health workers to receive messages from a variety of media like email, text, fax and voicemail.

Most important, the county doesn’t have to employ experts to manage it since the solution is hosted. Any problems that arise are handled by the AT&T Help Desk—freeing county health department employees to focus on the work that matters most.

The Takeaway
Hosted solutions help government agencies more easily manage the cost of deploying the communication systems employees need to perform their duties. While a premise-based system has its benefits, key factors to take into consideration are initial costs, potential software upgrades and system management. Hosted solutions level out the costs, making it easier for agencies to budget for the entire term of the contract.
These examples demonstrate the range of innovation in the public sector, even during and following the economic downturn. Agencies have found clever ways to get more for the public dollar by replacing disparate phone systems with IP networks, enabling government agencies to simplify management processes, support effective law enforcement, enable mobile workers, control costs and improve citizen service.

As government continues to find new ways to unite and serve constituents, technology has the power to help. The graph below, from the Center for Digital Government, shows how highly government agencies value their ability to collaborate and transform voice through unified communications – especially as they seek to manage the exponential growth in the volume of citizen data, the raised expectations for government transparency and the increased need for communication and information in real time.

Agencies will continue to face real challenges. Shrinking budgets, rising expectations and problematic forecasts complicate their operations. But the entrepreneurial spirit of government is increasingly evident as leaders at all levels come to grips with this new normal. From New England to the Gulf, through the Midwest to the West Coast, it’s clear that transformation goes a long way toward helping governments thrive. Perhaps when the going gets tough, the tough … get innovating and the results are profound.

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