



● Consolidating communication improving access to services ●

The Background

South Kesteven District Council's vision is to shape the future together with their partners and residents, to develop a place where people really matter - focusing on delivering outstanding services. Two of its key priorities are improving access to council services and finding better ways to communicate with residents.

South Kesteven District Council is a customer of Daisy Corporate Services (formerly Damovo UK).

The Challenge

Under the eGovernment banner, the council initiated a project to bring its various services into a dedicated customer service centre, to handle queries from the public about council services. However, still lacking was a system which could manage incoming calls within the customer service centre. In addition, the NTL Centrex system which was used to handle external calls lacked the depth of functionality required.

What's more, maintaining this network architecture was costly. While the main site used NTL's Centrex system, each of the area offices operated as a separate entity with its own BT phone lines and contracts. The council wanted to improve its communications as a whole, as Service Manager for Business Transformation and Information Management Andy Nix explains, "It was quite a clunky system. We had very little data about where telephone calls were routed around the organisation and very little information on calls coming in.

So we had no customer service functionality and a fairly old data network, with voice and data run as two separate networks. We also had a mixture of equipment, lots of bills coming in from different phones and, overall, management was pretty awkward too."

The Solution

South Kesteven District Council initiated a tender for a new communications infrastructure, including a completely new network, call centre software, network resilience and also the ability to bring the area offices onto the same internal telephone exchange. After evaluating the solutions proposed by six vendors, the council selected the Mitel 3300 IP communications platform, delivered via an Extreme data network, both of which were proposed by Daisy.

The Mitel solution convinced Andy and his team of the benefits of an IP-based communications solution, while Daisy also impressed them with its support package and technical expertise. Andy explains further about the decision, "The initial scope of our project involved teasing out what type of solution we were going to go for - IP, PBX or a hybrid of the two. We decided to go for a 100% IP solution after we were shown the benefits and the flexibility it provided. At this stage, IP telephony was still relatively new, but what we liked about Mitel was that the vendor had done a lot of work on IP telephony.



Also the phone product features matched what we wanted, it was a cost-effective solution and it presented a good technology fit.”

Daisy also provided a full support package covering the data network, phones and exchange system. For the services team, which was used to managing multiple support packages, having everything included under one contract was a big advantage in easing the management of its communications network, as Andy continues, “We liked the support package that Daisy offered, their technical understanding of the solution and their good project management. Daisy’s team was also clear in demonstrating the benefits of the solution compared to other vendors. They were certainly far more accommodating than other providers and offered to show us their support facilities, whereas in other cases we had to demand it. So not only were they more transparent, but when we saw the support operations we were satisfied that they were efficient and well-run.”

The Mitel call centre software, which was also implemented, has been integrated with the council’s CRM system, so that callers can speak to an agent who has department-specific knowledge and who can update the back office system with new caller information. The eventual aim is to get to a point where anyone can answer any calls.

With the software installed, the council can now also monitor call pick-up rates and customer satisfaction far better than it ever could before. As Andy comments, “Probably now we value that solution as much as the whole system. It is very good call centre software and probably the feature we’ve maximised the most. People log in to manage different queues and we monitor in real time the length of time residents have to wait and can shift resources accordingly.”

Daisy’s project management team worked closely with the council to ensure that everything ran smoothly. The changeover to the new system was carried out during a weekend and then 300 new IP phones were rolled out to staff desktops over a period of time.

“That was the painful part, lots of scrabbling under desks and chasing wires. But in terms of the whole project, nothing

desperately went wrong, which was good. We had a very good team from Daisy and I have nothing but praise for them. The project manager did a spectacularly good job, he bent over backwards to help us as much as he possibly could.”

Daisy provided full training support to the council’s staff, and as Andy comments, “It was well done and we liked what was offered.” The Mitel solution also lets the IT team devolve more management to the end users, so employees can make changes to their desk phones without requiring the intervention of the IT department

The Result

In addition to the obvious benefits for residents, South Kesteven District Council has identified further benefits of the new communications infrastructure since installation. For example, its main site is based in an old building, which in some rooms prevents new data points being installed. However, with IP telephony Andy does not have to install separate voice and data network points, but can share the same network point, considerably minimising the amount of disruption to the existing infrastructure.

“They may not have been key drivers. But as we went through the project, we started to see some of the benefits of IP emerge through phone functionality and the freeing up of network points. We also like the flexibility of being able to manage the phones remotely and move people around without a hitch. What’s more, we now have increased stability and speed in the network architecture, whereas before we had periods of downtime.”

From Andy’s perspective, managing only one support contract for both voice and data is also a significant benefit, “Before, we had an ad hoc network supported by different vendors, so this gave us a chance to start again with a brand new network. At the tender stage, we might not have understood as clearly the benefits and challenges of starting again, but now we’re definitely seeing the advantages of having a well-managed network with one vendor solution.



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