



Customer Case Study:

VoiceAbility www.voiceability.org

Charity with 200 telephone extensions

Interview with Peter Bixby, Information Systems Manager at VoiceAbility

Charity Background

VoiceAbility supports people with mental health issues, learning disabilities and those on the autistic spectrum, to express their needs and rights. VoiceAbility is a recent merger of two charities with similar goals, Advocacy Partners and Speaking Up, bringing together different groups of people and locations. VoiceAbility now has 20 offices across the country from Yorkshire to Kent with over 140 telephone extensions and plans to expand to 200 extensions.

Peter Bixby, who operates the telephone and IT systems at VoiceAbility, explained that most of their referrals, from doctors and social workers, or families and individuals, are made by telephone:

“There are two primary ways we interact with people: one is face to face meetings and the other is on the telephone. **90% of our referrals will come in by telephone and we have a huge amount of contact with people by telephone, so a phone system is hugely important for us.**”



The Challenge

Advocacy Partners initially acquired a VOIspeed phone system when they had outgrown their Panasonic wall mounted switchboard connected to a few BT lines. The charity grew rapidly and their VOIspeed system expanded with them. Several years later, following merger with Speaking Up to form VoiceAbility, they had the challenge of rolling out a single system over both organisations - a choice between Cisco and VOIspeed:

“The other organisation has a full- fledged Cisco phone system. Unfortunately we don’t have the in- house expertise to maintain it and it is extremely expensive. We have dozens of ISDN lines around the organisation and the office calls relied on VPNs being in place and being stable, and our VPN structure has been awful! **By going to VOIspeed, anywhere there is broadband access, people can log on and it is like being in the office ... its brilliant!**”

The Solution

The VOIspeed IP telephone system currently supports 140 extensions, and will be expanded to 200 extensions.

Peter explains the choice of hardware and the challenge for those employees used to Cisco; “We have gone for the soft phones and USB devices, because of cost and flexibility. Our employees have been used to phones with no software interface at all.”

VoiceAbility are currently rolling out the VOIspeed system and training employees in each of their offices.

Key infrastructure features are

- VOIspeed USB phones and headsets.
- VoIP used by all, with every office having broadband.
- Three main servers connected via WAN route.
- SDSL lines where there are servers.
- IP failover to second SIP carrier with separate broadband line.

The Outcome

Peter Bixby describes the impact of the phone system on their organisation to date:

○ Cost Saving

“Within Advocacy Partners all of our calls were routed via BT and therefore we were paying the full regular price for BT calls, so certainly going via VOIspeed our individual call costs have come down. At the same time the phone system has been far more useful so people have used it more... so our overall costs have gone up, but that is only in proportion to the number of people now using the phones. **What has saved money is that we don't have as many BT lines as we used to, so the cost of individual calls has gone down and the number of lines we are paying for is less.**”

Although it is too early to report on the cost savings for VoiceAbility, it is evident that economic austerity and need for cost cutting was key to their choice of VOIspeed over Cisco:

“When the organisations merged we had the choice of rolling out the VOIspeed phone system across the whole organisation or the CISCO phone system across what was Advocacy Partners. The reason we need a cost effective phone system, is the current economic climate. With the recent comprehensive spending review, all the local authorities have been reducing their expenditure, and the vast majority of our funding comes from local authorities. **It is important that we cut our central costs as much as possible. VOIspeed is the most cost effective way we have come up with doing so.**”

○ Remote working & unity

“There is a range of things that are better for us, the obvious one is that the system shows you as though we are in the same office. **It is as easy for someone to work from home, as from one of our remote offices as it is to be in one of our main offices.**”

There is a unification of the way people work across the organisation. As the organisation gets larger you become detached and you don't know who the other people are in the organisation. Just seeing peoples' names on the soft phones helps with organisation identification.”

○ Features

Peter reported that they use all the normal phone system features, including Voicemail, redirecting their phones to their mobiles and call conferencing. They only use call recording in exceptional circumstances as there are data protection issues, but that the internal messaging feature is very popular. “(VOIspeed) has increased the numbers of ways in which we communicate. I use call conferencing on a regular basis with our IT team and for training groups of people. Different users find different features helpful. **There are large numbers of people who use text messaging. The team that I was training today thought it would be a good way of getting someone else to put the kettle on!**”

○ Flexibility and the Cloud

“This third server that we have commissioned is hosted on a virtual server that we rent monthly. There is a move in the not-for-profit sector to move as much stuff to the Cloud as possible. We can have our own phone system but we don't have hardware or need to pay for a monthly SDSL line. It is cloud based, so it is not reliant on our own infrastructure. **VOIspeed works just as well in the Cloud as on local hardware.**”

A satisfied customer, Peter Bixby concludes: **“I have recommended VOIspeed and will continue to do so.”**

For further information on this case study, please contact: marketing@voispeedltd.com