

The Prince's Trust makes the right call

Established in 1976, The Prince's Trust is one of the most effective and high profile charitable organisations in the UK. Set up with the express purpose of helping young people - particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds - the organisation has gone on to provide assistance to almost half a million individuals.

As might be anticipated, the work of The Prince's Trust is supported by a sizeable network of offices and employees nationwide. In total the organisation operates from over 60 offices throughout the UK, organised into nine English regions and the three Celtic countries. In keeping with an ethos of cost effectiveness and environmental friendliness, a significant percentage of the organisation's 800-strong workforce is made up of home-based tele-workers.

The challenge

The Prince's Trust is constantly reviewing its operating expenditure and overheads; telecommunications constitutes one of the organisation's biggest recurring costs. The Trust rents its office accommodation and leases are often renewed or replaced on a three-to-five year rotation, so a move to new premises provides the Trust with an ideal opportunity to replace telephone systems with the latest, most cost efficient technology.

Traditionally each of the Trust's 12 regional groupings had responsibility for sourcing its own communication solutions. This meant a variety of different PBXs were used to support the administration of the organisation, offering different levels of service in each region.

The solution

Barnsley-headquartered telecommunications reseller Active Voice & Data was nominated by The Prince's Trust as the preferred supplier of telephony systems when upgrades are required in any of the regions. In turn Active Voice & Data selected Siemens Communications as its preferred equipment partner and the advanced HiPath communications platform as the preferred solution for the Trust's rolling communications modernisation programme.

"As and when they need systems changing, the Trust is using Siemens and HiPath. Siemens was chosen because of the strength of the product," comments Iain Simpson, Active Voice & Data's founder and Managing Director.

"Underpinning this is the future-proof nature of the Siemens platform. The Trust is getting a solution that has all the facilities of a modern PBX but one that is flexible enough that installations can be networked when required in the future. They can also go forward with VoIP in the confidence that HiPath can deliver that when needed."

This is borne out by Colin Heath, MIS chief at The Prince's Trust. "Active Voice & Data are very on the ball and very knowledgeable" says Heath. "In the evaluation process we took advice from more than one of our suppliers. We looked at two or three possible solutions but the arguments for Siemens' platform were overwhelming. The flexibility is there, the scalability is there, and we know that the investment is protected with future changes"

According to Heath there are two main drivers of the Trust's communications upgrade programme, one is to increase the quality of service to the organisation's clients by improving the communications capabilities that support its staff. He cites the example of missed calls on the Trust's freephone service. "One of the reasons calls are missed is that many of the 60 offices are only staffed by just two or three people. When the lines are engaged we have no facility to route these calls through to an alternative location, with the new Siemens technology call re-routing is now possible."

The second main driver of the upgrade project is cost-reduction, "I'd say we're looking for an overall reduction in costs of at least ten per cent" comments Heath. There are several possible elements to this, first is the networking efficiency that VoIP can deliver, another is the prospect of networking different sites together using one PBX.

"The Trust has a lot of home workers and satellite sites, instead of putting phone systems on every site with voicemail and database access, they can actually centralise certain services providing substantial savings" suggests Simpson



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A third consideration is that centralising and standardising the sourcing of communications also allows The Prince's Trust to negotiate more advantageous terms for what it buys, and also provides a uniform service repertoire across the organisation.

The benefits

Siemens' HiPath solution is already saving money for the Trust in the London region. Here the Trust has, until recently, operated out of two main offices - Clapham and City Road, along with a number of satellite offices in the Boroughs not connected to the organisation's main telephone systems. "This diversity was costing us money" says Paddy Murphy, Head of Operations at The Prince's Trust London regional office. "We needed to bring systems together to increase our cost-effectiveness and ensure best practice was adopted."

The opportunity to do so arose when the accommodation at the two main offices became inadequate for the Trust's needs, the new London regional office in Moorgate has more than twice the space of its two predecessors combined.

The Trust's two existing PBX systems are being replaced by the HiPath communication server. Although the existing system at the City Road site was theoretically scalable to meet the needs of the new main office premises, in practice the cost to move it was more than the new Siemens solution.

As well as improved support for tele-workers and better remote access from field offices, the HiPath platform has a number of features that will significantly increase the productivity of The Prince's Trust's operations; one is the 'dummy' mailbox capability. With volunteers working only part-time it used to be problematic to ascertain if individuals were on-site or where they were located to receive messages. With dummy mailboxes callers can leave messages for on-site retrieval when the volunteers are at work, or remote retrieval when they are not" concludes Murphy.

For the future, The Prince's Trust is continuing to explore ways of further reducing its nationwide communications spend at the same time as making much more effective use of its available resources. The goal is to make the organisation more responsive to the needs of its clients. Siemens' advanced HiPath solution is central to achieving these objectives.



Case Study

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