

# ShoreTel and the City of Lakewood



ShoreTel leaps mountains to improve Colorado City's communications



## CHALLENGE

- *Replace aging phone system*
- *Consolidate communications between city hall, multiple facilities, and field personnel*
- *Improve the success rate for citizens reaching the right staff member*
- *Implement the new phone system quickly, on a reliable, cost-effective and easy to manage system*

## SOLUTION

- *Combine the phone and computer network using the ShoreTel UC system*
- *Place a single ShorePhone telephone on 1000+ city desks and counters to serve all of the City's needs*

## BENEFITS

- *Improved Service delivery to constituents using fully integrated communications across all city departments, ensuring calls can quickly be forwarded to the right person*
- *Improved Reliability 24x7x365 while reducing support costs and freeing-up internal staff time.*
- *Management Simplicity for providing new feature-rich capabilities, customizable work groups and integration with cell phones used by hundreds of mobile workers.*
- *Lower Total Cost of Ownership for acquiring and maintaining the system on an annual basis going forward.*

The City of Lakewood is Colorado's fourth largest City of nearly 150,000 residents located between Denver and the front range of the Rocky Mountains. Covering an area of more than 44 square miles, the City provides a full range of municipal services that include police, public works, water utilities, recreational activities, cultural events, and family assistance programs.

Local governments face constant challenges in fulfilling their constituents' requirements. The City of Lakewood, Colorado, a thriving Denver suburb, deals with thousands of phone calls daily and every call needs a response. Recreation centers must effectively process class registrations during peak enrollment times. Public Works must respond fast to utility locator requests coming in by fax and thousands of calls may occur during a snowstorm. The Police Department handles hundreds of non-emergency calls daily, and inspectors and code enforcement officers are part of the critical chain of communications, but they are working in the field, away from their desks.

ShoreTel has helped the City of Lakewood deal with these types of communications demands. Taking full advantage of the latest digital technologies to boost internal efficiencies and

optimize constituent communications is a top priority for Lakewood CIO, Boris Naschansky. The city has been recognized as one of the Top Ten Digital Cities in the United States for the past three years by the Center for Digital Government, an honor that recognizes cities that excel in the use of digital technologies to efficiently operate government, and communicate with citizens.

The City's 22-year-old phone system became increasingly costly and time-consuming to maintain. It offered limited or basic features for the 1,200 full-time and part-time employees located at over two dozen offices across the city. "We want to ensure that every call into the City's offices reaches the right person as quickly as possible," Mr Naschansky explained. "But on the old system incoming calls rang three times at one desk, three times at the next, and so on, finally ringing in the director's office, by which time if the party was still on the line, they were frustrated. Getting stuck in the cycle of returning calls and leaving voicemails back and forth was just not productive."

## Tax payers expect rock solid communications

Constituents often complained that calls went unanswered and voicemail boxes were full. City



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**Boris Naschansky**

CIO  
City of Lakewood

employees were frustrated with the phone system’s limitations. It was not possible to add more remote offices to the phone network affordably, and staff there was isolated and underserved. Even worse, the existing voicemail system was increasingly failing requiring the IT staff to send broadcasts to alert City Staff that messages might be lost, “due to overnight maintenance.” “Our IT help desk and engineering teams were constantly on pins and needles running fire drills, and frequently calling out contractors to do simple phone moves and changes,” said Wendy Shrader, manager of network services. “So we began to collect users’ needs from each department and sent out an RFQ and then an RFP to find a replacement system.”

The evaluation process was comprehensive and meticulous. Mr Naschansky and his team consulted with their previous vendor, Siemens, and also attended presentations from Cisco, Nortel and Avaya. They required extensive references to first qualify as a proven supplier. “We were looking for a vendor that was experienced in VoIP and not just traditional PBX or hybrid phone systems. We wanted them to understand the local government setting. After seeing ShoreTel at an industry event, and then visiting three ShoreTel government installations, we all felt they stood out in both of these areas.” explained Ms Shrader, who led the evaluation team.

Both ShoreTel and Avaya made the final shortlist, but it was ShoreTel’s focus on customer satisfaction and the system’s ease of use, that drove the decision to purchase and install the ShoreTel UC system. The Lakewood team was impressed that ShoreTel reseller partners receive their incentives based on their customer satisfaction scores. They were particularly delighted to learn that directly from ShoreTel CEO, John W Combs, while discussing their deployment plans and expectations.

### *Ease of installation opens up communications*

When it came to system management, the decision to go with ShoreTel was set. “Our ShoreTel partner, OCx, set up a pilot ShoreTel system in half a day, and started training that afternoon with some of the staff. The other vendor needed weeks to set up that kind of

pilot, and expected to set up a demo within a week,” said Shawn Cullingford, Lakewood’s telecommunications engineer. “The ShoreTel system is so simple to use, we all found the user interface extremely intuitive. Plus, ShoreTel is committed to one product; so we do not have to be backwards compatible with legacy technology, which impacts reliability and maintenance. Unlike some of the other vendors, ShoreTel is not three different operating systems on separate servers. We certainly did not want to add that level of complexity to our network.”

The City deployed a ShoreTel UC system across its city offices based on four ShoreGear T1K voice switches, eight ShoreGear 220 T1 switches, and four ShoreGear 24A switches. More than 1,000 ShorePhone IP Telephones were deployed throughout city offices, standardizing on the IP-265 model for ease of support.

Training was conducted by OCx as a train-the-trainer program, and rolled out to employees over two months. “During the initial implementation phase, OCx provided useful training outlines and even programmed a button on my phone so I could reach Shawn quickly and easily in the event of urgent questions,” Ms Shrader said.

### *Flexible integration improves services*

A key element of the ShoreTel deployment included taking advantage of ShoreTel’s open standards-based architecture to integrate a call recording system. Police investigators can choose to record calls with witnesses, suspects, and other persons of interest. “We were able to set the system up so that some calls to the police department can be recorded at a touch of a button. This is important for cases that end up in court,” Ms Shrader said. “This ability to fine tune features to suit our needs helps us improve efficiency and make staff more productive.”

All city departments are now using the ShoreTel phone system and can fully participate in citywide communications. Other important features that the city required were call handling modes, and work group capabilities that would ensure all calls into the city’s main number are answered quickly. Since



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### Wendy Shrader

Manager of Network Services  
City of Lakewood

the city cannot afford a 311 call center; it is important that staff can answer a call quickly, and forward it to the right person.

"We have implemented eight work groups already, and seen a significant improvement in workflow," Mr Cullingford explained. "The largest is at the City Clerks office, where between eight and ten desks can pick up calls. Our golf course office also has a work group of about three people, and easily can add more agents during heavy call volume events." The same technique will apply in setting up hotlines during snowstorms and other emergency events.

### *Call handling saves time and boosts productivity*

More than 30 operating divisions throughout the city are using hunt groups to control the flow of calls at different times of the day. In the Public Works and Planning departments, calls can be answered by employees in offices when staff at the permit counter is handling inquiries in person. On a recent snow day, city workers were able to advise callers that the offices were closing at 2 p.m. by rapidly customizing the work and hunt group settings.

"We are also using auto-attendants as back up in case a hunt group does not answer," Ms Shrader said. "And we've been able to record greeting messages in Spanish in the automated call distribution feature, which is another useful tool that helps us better serve the community. Everyone is finding it easier to conduct business. For instance, our CFO forwards his calls to his Black Berry cell phone so that he never misses a call. He likes knowing exactly what calls or voicemails are waiting for him, so he can prioritize his workload, especially during high demand times."

Many of the city's employees are starting to take advantage of the easy-to-use ShoreWare Call Manager, the desktop user interface that integrates with Microsoft Outlook to eliminate the use of printed phone books for City staff use. "There are days when I spend all my time on calls, yet never touch the phone," Mr Naschansky said. "Everyone loves the ability to

easily handle and process calls and combine personal contacts for one-click dialing."

### *Management simplicity saves time and money*

Ease of use also extends to management simplicity. After training the team on the ShoreTel system in about two hours, any help desk agent can support internal queries. "ShoreTel's simple Web-based system management console has made life significantly easier, and we're much more productive compared to the old system," Mr Cullingford said. "Now we can use a PC from any desk at the city to make changes in a matter of minutes. We no longer have to call out contractors, or need to invest in specialized phone system certification training."

As Lakewood replaced their old PBX phone system with ShoreTel, they found that they could also replace the entire network infrastructure since the cost of implementing ShoreTel was about one third of what the other vendors bid. This savings enabled them to re-cable their remote facilities and replace all of their network switches and routers. During the project the City's ability to deliver services was not interrupted.

The flexibility and advanced feature set of the ShoreTel UC system means Lakewood is already planning future upgrades to its work processes. Currently, the city has a video arraignment system, in which judges can stay in their chambers to arraign prisoners at county jails located miles away. The city is testing the ShoreTel video capabilities in ShoreWare Professional Call Manager to replace a customized system so that judges initiate a video call for an arraignment with a few mouse clicks from a PC.

"We told our users from day one that if they can think of a better way to process and handle their calls, we can do it within the ShoreTel system," Ms Shrader said. "Not a day has gone by when we do not hear from someone that they love their new ShoreTel phone system."