

ShoreTel and Elgin Community College



Elgin Community College Switches to ShoreTel Pure IP Unified Communications Solutions



CHALLENGE

- *Elgin Community College needed to replace a 20-year-old Avaya PBX-based system that was unreliable and outdated.*

SOLUTION

- *Elgin Community College selected ShoreTel's Pure IP Unified Communications (UC) solutions to enhance its overall infrastructure and offer a more robust set of communications capabilities for its teachers, staff and students. The solution was implemented by providing the College with ShoreGear voice switches for its main campus and downtown satellite location, as well as over 1,000 ShorePhone IP telephones.*

BENEFITS

- *The College benefits from ShoreTel's n+1 redundancy, which improves reliability and saves money by efficiently using its hardware and software.*
- *ShoreWare Director provides easy access to and management of the system from anywhere on the network. Administration of moves, adds and changes is quick and easy, taking just minutes.*
- *Employee productivity and caller responsiveness is enhanced due to the rich feature set of the ShoreTel IP Unified Communications system.*



ShoreTel Provides Simplicity, Reliability, and the Robust Feature Set that Community College was Seeking

Founded in 1949, located mid-way between Chicago and Rockford in the Fox River Valley, Elgin Community College's main campus is easily accessible from U.S. 20 and Interstate 90 in southwest Elgin. Including 12 buildings on a picturesque 145-acre campus, the College's main campus nurtures an ideal environment for learning. Just minutes away from the College's main campus lies its Fountain Square Campus. In this restored retail building in the heart of downtown Elgin, courses are offered in adult and basic education as well as English as a Second Language. The College employs more than 1,000 faculty and staff and is responsible for educating a growing population of roughly 17,000 students.

Deciding on the Switch

In late 2007, Elgin Community College determined that its 20-year-old Avaya PBX-based telephone system was too unreliable and insufficient to support the College's growth. Michael Chahino, the College's Director of Network Operations and Information Security, issued a request for

proposal from Avaya, Cisco and ShoreTel® on each vendor's Unified Communications offering.

"We did a lot of research on our own and then invited the industry leaders to provide proposals and present product demonstrations," said Chahino. "I have a lot of experience with Cisco and I was very impressed with the simplicity of ShoreTel. We have Cisco equipment at the College, but we still liked ShoreTel."

Chahino's colleague, Bud Miedema, who serves as the College's Telecommunications Specialist, agreed. "ShoreTel gave us a demo and we liked the system's simplicity. It looked like it would work well in our environment," said Miedema. "I was an Avaya technician for many years, but when Avaya did their presentation, the system couldn't match ShoreTel's ease of administration."

Based on the priorities set by the College, including reliability, simplicity, and a robust feature set, ShoreTel's UC system was chosen. With the help of its integration partner, Oak Park, Illinois-based WanCom, ShoreTel provided the College with 15 ShoreGear® 120 voice switches, five ShoreGear T1 voice switches, and two



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voicemail servers (one to serve as a backup). Beginning February 2008, the College has now deployed more than 1,000 ShorePhone™ IP telephones throughout its two locations. “The brilliance in the implementation process has been that both systems are co-existing so we don’t have any downtime,” said Chahino. “We’re using just one voicemail system—ShoreTel’s—because we moved everyone to that first. Then department by department, WanCom trains employees who are then moved from Avaya to ShoreTel. There’s no downtime in between so people are ready to hit the ground running.”

Reliability

ShoreTel’s call control software is distributed to every voice switch, which eliminates any single point of failure. In the highly unlikely event a ShoreGear voice switch fails, the other switches on the network automatically take on the call-processing load (n+1 redundancy).

One of the reasons Elgin Community College chose ShoreTel was that its uniquely distributed architecture allows for the use of n+1 redundancy. ShoreTel’s n+1 redundancy improves reliability since it does not double the hardware. For instance, the n+1 redundancy solution may need two extra units (where parts to the IP telephony system are duplicated within the two units); while a 1:1 redundancy solution needs five extra units because each unit is duplicated in its entirety. Essentially, using n+1 redundancy creates a multi-unit system with no single point of failure and eliminates the need for 1:1 redundancy, saving power, cost, and possible failure to power up if a standby unit in “cold” (or un-powered) mode is faulty and not detected as defective until it’s needed.

“The reliability of the ShoreTel UC system was especially attractive,” said Chahino “We like the distributed architecture, specifically the n+1 idea. If something happens to the T1 on our main campus, we can route the traffic to our remote campus using the network.”

Management Simplicity

Elgin Community College uses ShoreWare® Director, a browser-based management interface, for end-to-end management of the ShoreTel UC system. This provides easy access

easy access to management of the system from anywhere on the network. An administrator can manage everything including voicemail, automated attendant and desktop applications within seconds. Adding a new user simply entails clicking a button, and the system automatically updates the centralized database and every voice switch. At the time the new user is added, a mailbox is automatically created, the automated attendant dial-by-name and number feature is updated, and online directories are revised. Changes are made just as quickly.

Robust Features

With the ShoreTel UC system in place and ShoreWare Personal Call Manager integrated with Microsoft Outlook®, all Elgin Community College employees are now on the same phone and voicemail system, using 4-digit dialing to reach co-workers and the ability to dial them by name. Calls can be transferred the same way. The ShoreTel system provides employees with integrated messaging, such as contact screen pop and calendar integration. Personal Call Manager gives users a powerful, all-purpose tool for managing voice communications. With it, employees can quickly type in a name, bring up a number, and make their calls from local online directories—all with the click of a mouse and right from the desktop.

“After people have come back from training and have learned about Personal Call Manager—and this is before the phones are even deployed—they’re asking, ‘when can we get that,’ they like it so much,” said Miedema. “We’ve had so many comments from various people about how much the ShoreTel system helps them do their jobs better.”

Elgin Community College is also using ShoreTel’s hunt group capability to ensure all calls are answered by a live person rather than voicemail. Calls ring multiple extensions in a specified sequence or all at once. For example, calls into the facilities maintenance department can be picked up at any phone in the shop building. This feature ensures that each caller reaches someone they need quickly (especially important during a snow storm when an area needs plowing), enhancing the college’s overall responsiveness and communications.



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Finally, the college has also established several workgroups—for such things as registration, records, and student accounts. ShoreTel’s workgroups feature enables the College to consolidate all its inquiry calls to these groups into one number each, and calls are routed to the next available agent. Productivity is enhanced, and callers get faster response times. This feature also provides basic reporting capabilities to help the College measure call volume and make work schedule changes as necessary.

“Supervisors can see calls that are queued up so they can forecast necessary staff changes to run the department more effectively,” said Chahino. “Before we had the ShoreTel system, it was much less scientific – now we’re planning much more in advance and tracking processes and progress very closely.”

Elgin Community College is satisfied with its experience with both ShoreTel and WanCom. “Not only are we happy here in Information Technology, but campus-wide, the ShoreTel system has been received very positively,” said Chahino. “Everybody who’s attended training with WanCom has given positive feedback about the training and the ShoreTel UC system, and as people begin working with the phones, we’re hearing more and more great things.”