

IP TELEPHONY GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

North Central Texas College's antiquated systems were getting harder to fix and that created a natural opening for ShoreTel IP telephony.



Challenge:

Tie together North Central Texas College's three geographically distributed campuses and in a way that gives all users at this educational institution advanced telephony features while controlling local and long-distance service costs. Stop supporting three different voice platforms or Centrex services and reduce monthly telecom service charges.

Solution:

Tap 16 ShoreTel voice switches and ShoreTel Call Manager to enable voice mail, directory calling, seamless call transferring between distant locations and workgroup call-center creation for different departments' seasonal or temporary requirements.

Benefits:

Eliminated \$35,000 in annual long distance charges, not to mention hundreds of POTS lines, which any faculty or staff could order at will. A unified voice and data platform also ensures that North Central Texas College trains technicians only once, and even then, most maintenance is done via a web interface to the ShoreTel IP telephony switches from any of its three campus locations.

Some people get nostalgic about favorite old cars or a comfortable pair of shoes and couldn't think about getting rid of them. But Steve Rigler, Network System Administrator for North Central Texas College (NCTC), didn't have to think twice about whether to dump a combination of Centrex and PBXs that were serving NCTC's three campuses. The monthly telecom service costs threatened to spiral out of control and Rigler dreaded service problems on the old Fujitsu PBX because he couldn't find any technicians around who knew how to work on the thing.

"We had different systems on each of our three campuses and lots of management overhead," Rigler explains. There weren't any processes for faculty and staff to get phone service, so anyone could call up and order a regular phone line. "We had a bunch of POTS lines coming into the campus and no one person who was responsible for telephones," he adds. Worse, Centrex charges on one of three campuses were getting really expensive. And since faculty and staff couldn't transfer calls or direct dial between campuses, long-distance charges were running almost \$3,000 a month.

"We couldn't transfer calls between different groups on campus. Students would call and want to speak to an instructor at another campus and were told they had to dial long distance to reach the right campus," Rigler says. "We also couldn't transfer calls to different student services, which caused headaches for operators and hurt productivity," he adds.

The 81-year-old North Central Texas College in Gainesville, Texas is the oldest continuously operated two-year public institution in the state and has about 6,750 students at campuses in Gainesville, Corinth (30 miles south of Gainesville), and Bowie (45 miles west of Gainesville). Gainesville is the hub of the tri-campus network, with T1 lines connecting the other two locations.

So when North Central Texas College began construction on a new building on the Gainesville campus about three years ago, Rigler and his colleagues found that they were all out of extensions for new numbers. It provided the perfect opening for wholesale upgrade. "We undertook to install a new phone system on all the campuses at same time and put in a new phone system that would make things more unified," Rigler says.

North Central Texas College underwent an exhaustive request for proposal (RFP) process, having looked at nearly 20 different vendors. They asked vendors to treat the three campuses as a single, virtual campus. NCTC also required the winning vendor to continue to support analog phones with special features for faxing or fire alarms, in addition to the VoIP phones. That requirement alone helped winnow down the vendor list, Rigler recalls.



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In addition to ShoreTel, North Central Texas College looked at Cisco, Avaya and Iwatsu and then narrowed its shortlist to ShoreTel and Iwatsu.

FIELD DEMO UNDERSCORES SHORETEL SUPERIORITY

Rigler and his colleagues made a field trip to Arlington Federal Credit Union in the Dallas metro area that was using ShoreTel's equipment and software in a three-site configuration with three T1 lines that was very similar to what NCTC had in mind. "Seeing that demonstration sold us on ShoreTel," Rigler says.

Like any smart customer, Rigler and his staff were diligent about calling reference accounts from both vendors to find out what their IP telephony experiences had been. Rigler also took it a step further to connect with ShoreTel customers to make sure he was getting the full story. "ShoreTel customers said that the system was fantastic," Rigler notes. ShoreTel was the clear winner in terms of features, flexibility and overall customer satisfaction.

He and his colleagues were impressed by the reliability of the ShoreTel distributed architecture as well as the simplicity of the ShoreTel Personal Call Manager application that NCTC faculty, staff and operators now rely on.

"We liked ShoreTel's overall system architecture and the ability to do remote management via a web interface," Rigler says. "I can't tell you how many times we wished for this level of remote visibility into one of the other campuses' call systems," he adds.

Rigler and his colleagues can manage all three sites, including the PBX, voice mail and automated attendant, from any location from any web browser, using ShoreTel Director. New users can be added in seconds from anywhere on the network using a browser. When new IP phones are plugged in, the ShoreTel system immediately recognizes them and configures them for service. Even installation of ShoreGear voice switches is plug-and-play.

With ShoreTel, there is no single point of failure for dial tone. Call management is distributed to every ShoreGear Voice Switch, making the system independent of LAN and WAN service interruption.

A DEFINITE TRADE UP

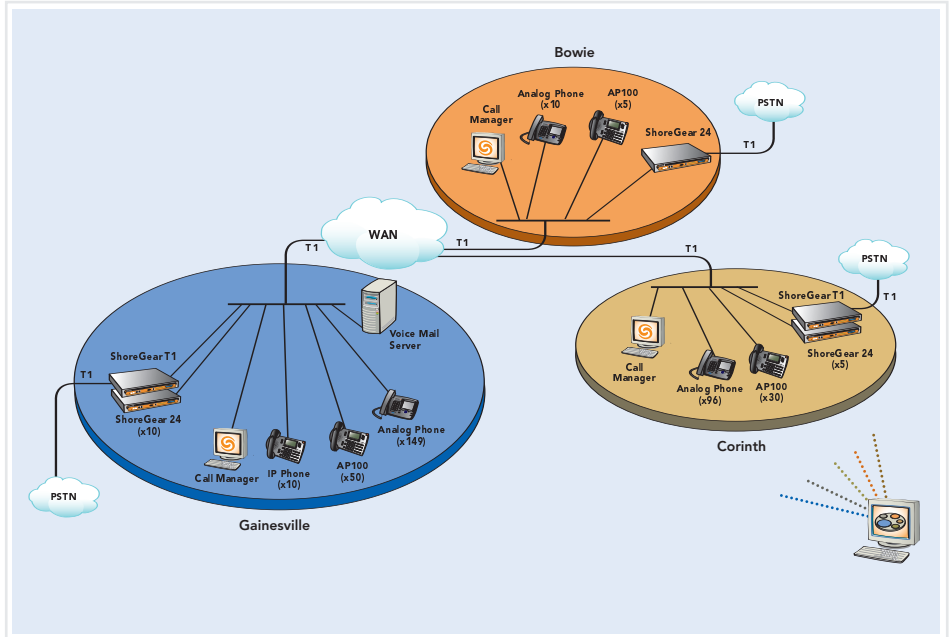
In June 2004, the college began installation of 16 ShoreTel 24-port ShoreGear Voice Switches, and two ShoreTel ShoreGear T1 for PRI switching, 10 ShorePhone IP100 IP phones, 120 ShorePhone AP100 analog phones, and 220 analog phones. Growth calls for additional IP phones. Before deploying the ShoreTel system, not all of NCTC's users had voice mail, so gaining voice mail was one of the more immediate day-to-day productivity improvements for the faculty and staff.

"We went from a phone system that had no caller ID or voice mail to being able to transfer and conference calls. With ShoreTel, we made a full-blown leap forward in technology," says Jason Mann, Administrative Computer Support Specialist for NCTC. His users also like ShoreTel's ability to



integrate with their Novell GroupWise e-mail to get electronic notifications of pending voice mails.

Teaching faculty, staff and operators to use Personal Call Manager was painless as they learned how to transfer, conference and access directories for extension information. User documentation is available online, which cuts down on training. "In less than two hours, users can get the basic features down easily," says Jean Anderson, NCTC's Helpdesk Manager.



NCTC deployed ShoreTel to 3 locations with 350 phones.

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"The ShoreTel Call Manager is one of the best features you can possibly have. If you use the phone a lot, ShoreTel will really simplify your life," adds Rigler.

The admissions department puts the ShoreTel Workgroup Contact Center through a most vigorous workout before each semester begins. ShoreTel's Workgroup Contact Center enables workgroups to have voice call routing so they can consolidate calls to a single number.

"Numerous agents answer the calls that are coming in on a single line," Mann explains. "We can designate six people to handle all those calls to admissions when they start pouring in." NCTC's business office, library, computer helpdesk, and of course, the operator who answers the college's main telephone number also use the workgroup call-center application.

The virtual PBX that embraces the three campuses also gives the college the routing flexibility and savings it desired in the first place. "What's not to like about \$35,000 in annual long distance savings?" Rigler laughs. "We don't have to pay the phone company to come out and do our moves, adds and changes," and better yet, users aren't sitting around at their new desks waiting for dial tone. Now when they unpack, dial tone is just an Ethernet jack away.