



Industry: Ergonomic office fittings

Installation: Initially a 14-person phone system with ShoreTel switch, SIP trunk, server and desktop software

Date of Install: Early 2006



Challenge:

A move to bigger premises was the chance for 2iQ to upgrade from an old PBX that offered limited features and leased lines for Internet access.

Solution:

A new ShoreTel IP telephony system was deployed, including hardware and software, integrating multi-featured phones with a wireless network, Internet access and entry-phone.

Benefits:

- Dramatic cost savings over previously separately-billed features.
- Enhanced internal and external communications.
- Improved customer service.

S U C C E S S S T O R I E S

OFFICE ERGONOMICS

UK'S LEADING ERGONOMIC OFFICE PRODUCTS SPECIALIST ENJOYS ITS OWN IMPROVED WORK ENVIRONMENT

2iQ Switches to ShoreTel IP Telephony and Realizes Immediate Savings and Boost in Image, Productivity, and Customer Service

2iQ is the UK's leading specialist trade distributor for developing and supplying ergonomic products for the modern working environment.

Its monitor and computer supports, cable management and power and data solutions are in use with a range of organizations, helping to save space and enhance standards of health, safety and comfort for computer, audio-visual and office users.

From its headquarters in Watford, 2iQ works with the world's leading office furniture manufacturers, architects, designers and facilities management specialists, as well as the technology industry.

"We modify and enhance working environments to match the needs of those working in them, linking people and technology," says Managing Director Stewart Colbourne. "We will also tailor and design to particular specifications."

2iQ's unique status in its market, and growing demand for the products it supplies, has led to a rapid expansion of the business.

"We've grown fast in the last few years," says Colbourne. "We've actually trebled our business since 2004."

EXPANDING BUSINESS, CHANGING NEEDS

With business booming, and more employees being recruited, 2iQ found itself short of space and decided to move to bigger premises. "As part of that move we wanted to explore ways we could improve on our phone system, as well as our PC connectivity and Internet access," says Colbourne. "We had a very basic PBX-style set-up, and were interested in something that offered a bit more. We also wanted to look at alternatives to the leased lines we were using for Internet access, and at running our laptops off a wireless network."

A conversation with Magnus Kelly, Director of local technology supplier MCom, convinced Colbourne that it was possible to have these and other benefits in one integrated solution. After evaluating a number of options, 2iQ went with MCom's proposal of a system based around hardware and software from IP telephony specialist ShoreTel.

Nine months from the deployment of the new system, results were already stunning.

"We knew we could save money from what we were paying before," says Colbourne. "The way it's worked out with the new phone system, we reckon we'll pay for it in two years."

For what it was costing 2iQ each month for leased lines alone, he says, the company is now getting a much faster Internet connection speed, as well as lower telephone costs.



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Managing Director,
2iQ

EASE OF USE AND MANAGEMENT

At the heart of the new system is a ShoreTel ShoreGear-40 switch, designed to support up to 40 IP phones and suited to the needs of a small but fast-growing business like 2iQ. With its Media Gateway Control Protocol (MGCP), the ShoreGear-40 communicates with IP phones, soft phones and other IP endpoints, as well as with standard analogue phones, offering features like Caller ID, Name and Number, and Message Waiting.

Running on the server connected to the switch is ShoreTel’s ShoreWare Director software, a browser-based network management tool that provides a single management interface for all voice applications. The software is designed to bypass the complexity of running multiple PBXs, voice mail systems, automated attendants, and ACD systems - all with multiple management interfaces.

On each 2iQ employee’s PC sits ShoreTel’s Call Manager software. Its graphical interface gives users quick access to a robust set of IP telephony features. The application gives all users control over telephone communications, and by distributing telephony functions to the desktop, it reduces the need for support staff.

The SIP-enabled phone system connects through an IP radio on the roof of the 2iQ building to a network of IP radios in the Watford area maintained by MCom, focused around a main transmitter on top of the local YMCA. This in turn links to a main hub in London’s Docklands, connecting to the wider world of wired and mobile telecommunications.

“Innovatively,” says Kelly, “this last PSTN connection is provided wirelessly using WiMax wide area networking technology.”

SAVINGS AND ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY/ CUSTOMER SERVICE

“One major result of this system for 2iQ is that call charges are cheaper,” Kelly says. “Calls inside the network are free, but even calls outside cost less now, with only one termination fee to pay, plus no line rental.”

Off the LAN switch runs a WiFi network to which all 2iQ laptops are connected - a major requirement from the outset.

Also part of the system is a door entry function. A box by the front entrance makes the phones inside ring when the buzzer is pressed. Whoever picks up the call can check the identity of the visitor and open the door for them using their phone.

Another important gain for 2iQ is much improved phone links with off-site employees thanks to ShoreTel’s SoftPhone feature. This lets mobile and remote workers enjoy transparent access to enterprise telephony features while on the road or working from home.

“Each remote worker has a router, a PC and a phone at home,” says Kelly. “With their headset, they can connect instantly to anyone in the office.”

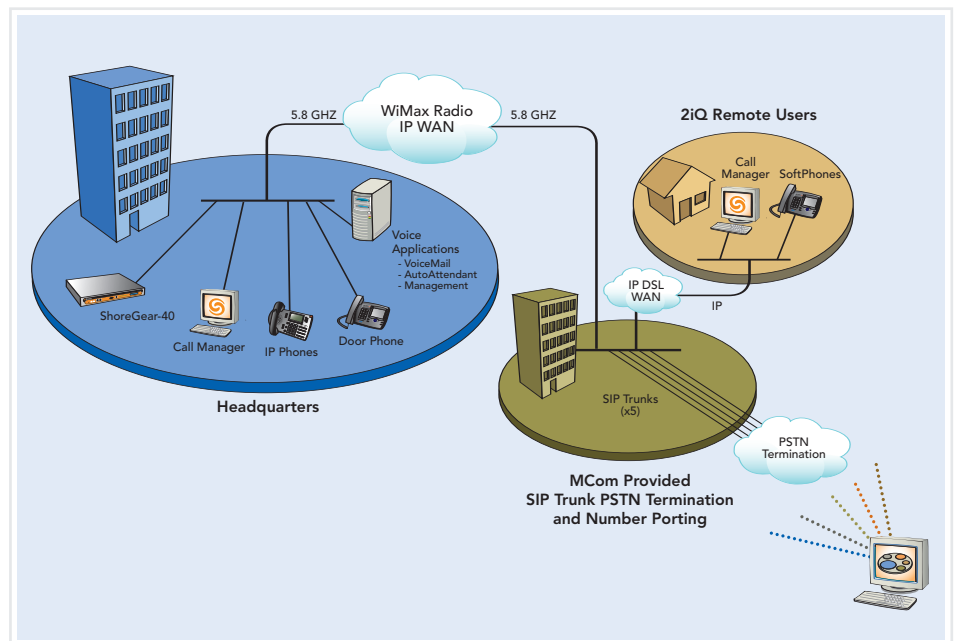
“I work remotely in Norwich, our industrial designer is in Northampton, and we have people who work on the south coast,” says 2iQ Marketing Director Jerry Calaby. “With a SoftPhone licence, it’s like they’re all in the next room. You put a call through to someone’s extension, and they pick it up wherever they are plugged in. This is very important to us and to how we service customers.”



Colbourne says all employees are pleased with the extra things they can do with their IP desk phone: “Each user has their own mailbox and can easily dial into it remotely,” he says. “You can dial on-screen using a headset.”

In addition to a main switchboard number, all employees have their own direct-dial 0845 number as well, he says: “You can set it up to let the call follow you when you’re away from the office. Again, it’s all about making life easy for the customer. If someone leaves you a voice message, it comes up on your computer. If you’re in a meeting, or away on holiday, you can click the phone to ‘off’ so the caller knows you’re not there. The software on your desktop brings up your database of contacts, so you can scroll through them on-screen. Click on a name, and it dials their number.”

The conference call facility has proved very useful as well, says Colbourne: “We often need to talk to our design company, and it’s great to be able to do that so easily involving a number of people.”



2iQ deployed ShoreTel to 3 locations.

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Marketing Director,
2iQ

The inclusive high-speed Internet connection has paid dividends too: “The performance of our previous Internet connection was not great for the price we were paying. Now, with everything on one bill, we save a lot of trouble.”

In only a few months since the new system went live, Colbourne looks back with satisfaction on his decision to run with it. “This was a significant and important investment for us as a small company,” he says. “But what we save with it means it’ll pay for itself in two years versus what we were paying for phone and Internet before. There’s lots of hidden elements to it as well that you can’t quantify so easily, like saving customers time, and managing your messages more efficiently.”

LOOKING FORWARD, MAKING PLANS

“ShoreTel’s products are easy to use, and have proved popular with our staff,” says Colbourne. “Selling change to people is always difficult. We asked everybody to be open-minded and now they are comfortable so we can start to introduce other features. If it’s going to help them speed up what they do, then they’ll go for it, now they’ve seen what it can do.”



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2iQ*

He says ShoreTel has had an important and ongoing role in training staff to get the best from the system.

"We'll be looking for further training to enable our staff to make use of more and more of the system's features," he says. "There's all sort of potential we haven't taken advantage of yet. My priority is to explore this and then maybe we'll look at ways of extending the investment into other areas."

He says a possible development for the future is coordinating the system with the company's whole database. "A call would come in, your screen shows you who's calling, and the customer's record would come up automatically. That way you're not fiddling around trying to find the information you want and can instead focus on what the customer is saying to you."

The new ShoreTel system is already helping to boost 2iQ's image in the market, believes Colbourne. "Not many companies I know of like us have got a VoIP system yet," he says. "We mention it in our company literature when we talk about our new offices. It shows people we're a growing, forward looking company, committed to expanding and serving our customers better."