

ANTHONY & SYLVAN TAKES THE PLUNGE WITH VOIP

Leading Pool Firm Reduces Communications Costs with ShoreTel



Challenge:

With its rapid growth and increasing communications costs, Anthony & Sylvan started looking at VoIP solutions. In addition to cost savings, the company wanted to capitalize on features like a company-wide dial plan, find me follow me, and the ability to forward voice mails through e-mail.

Solution:

ShoreTel provided Anthony & Sylvan with a complete VoIP system, including hardware, software and IP phones.

Benefits:

ShoreTel solution unifies the 50-site company so everybody is on the same phone and voice mail system, employees enjoy four-digit dialing to reach co-workers in other locations, and calls can easily be transferred anywhere within the organization. Clients no longer need to hang up and dial another number to reach the right person, employees enjoy productivity-enhancing features, and the solution is easy and cost-effective to manage in-house.

Anthony & Sylvan Pools is among America's largest installers of custom-designed in-ground concrete residential swimming pools and spas. The company provides homeowners with new pool and spa installations, modernization of existing pools, equipment, service, supplies and backyard extras. Anthony & Sylvan installs among the highest number of swimming pools of any company in the growing U.S. market, with more than 360,000 in-ground swimming pools installed over the past 60 years.

ESCALATING COSTS DRIVE CHANGE

In 2003, Anthony & Sylvan took a close look at how it could reduce its communications costs, which were increasing steadily as the business grew. With 50 sites in 16 states and growing, the firm considered hardware and software changes, as well as the implementation of Voice over IP (VoIP) technology on its network. While reliability was an important factor since voice and data would utilize the same infrastructure, performance was also vital because of the firm's use of bandwidth-intensive applications such as SalesLogix and Microsoft's Exchange and Solomon. While corporate growth was a major factor, another challenge was the company's 50 locations that used independent PBXs, which did not allow Anthony & Sylvan to make changes quickly and easily and did not enable four-digit dialing between offices.

"We'd been looking at VoIP for about a year and a half and believed that VoIP as a technology was going to be ready to deploy very soon," said Tony Pizzelanti, Vice President of Information Technology at Anthony & Sylvan. "Before our research, we didn't believe VoIP was mature enough in terms of performance and reliability."

With its 50 sites using a mix of Mitel, small key systems, and Centrex systems, and voice mail capabilities at only some of the sites, it was the right time to consider a full, companywide VoIP solution. Anthony & Sylvan evaluated 15 different network vendors and also considered managed offerings. The company placed priority on ease of implementation and operation, scalability, and cost-effectiveness. Anthony & Sylvan spoke with customers of each vendor, watched product demonstrations, tested the solutions, and conducted extensive up-front return on investment (ROI) analyses. After this thorough evaluation process, Anthony & Sylvan decided on ShoreTel, specifically for its advanced technology, robust feature set, support for the organization's hub-and-spoke architecture, and ability to be managed in-house.



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– Bill Meyerowitz
 Director of Business Process Change
 Anthony & Sylvan Pools Corp.

ANTHONY & SYLVAN MAKES THE VOIP SWITCH

ShoreTel provided Anthony & Sylvan with 21 ShoreGear-40/8 voice switches, eight ShoreGear-60/12 voice switches, three ShoreGear-120/24 switches, and three ShoreGear-T1 switches. In addition, Anthony & Sylvan received 235 ShorePhone IP 210, 32 ShorePhone IP 560, and 11 ShorePhone IP 530 Telephones. Currently all of Anthony & Sylvan's employees are on the ShoreTel system; the last site installation was completed in March of 2006.

"ShoreTel was able to deliver a cost-effective solution with the same robust architecture to both our small and large locations," said Pizzelanti. "This architecture provided local presence for emergency 911, which other solutions would not be able to support without making major architecture changes. ShoreTel's cost effectiveness, and their ability to sell and support our system directly, fit into how we do business."

FEATURES IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND SIMPLIFY CHANGES

ShoreTel phone systems are easy to use, simple to manage, flexible, and reliable. With the ShoreTel system in place, all Anthony & Sylvan employees are now on the same phone and voice mail system, using four-digit dialing to reach employees at any site, and dialing co-workers by name with the simple click of a mouse. The solution allows Anthony & Sylvan to consolidate T1 lines, and the least-call routing capabilities allow the company to minimize costs by avoiding toll charges. For instance, if an employee in an office in Texas calls a customer in Maryland the call is routed through the company's data lines, through a Maryland office and out to the customer—completely bypassing toll charges.

ShoreTel's Personal Call Manager feature is especially important to Anthony & Sylvan. Personal Call Manager is ShoreTel's network client that integrates the entire phone system with Microsoft Outlook on users' desktops. With it, employees can make calls right from Outlook with the click of a mouse, send voice mails via e-mail, change phone settings, and retrieve voice mail messages.

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In addition, ShoreTel AnyPhone allows Anthony & Sylvan employees to sign in from any telephone handset and conduct their business from there temporarily. This was especially helpful in late 2005 when the company was moving one of its locations—employees could temporarily re-route their calls to other phones at which they would be working, so business continued as usual.

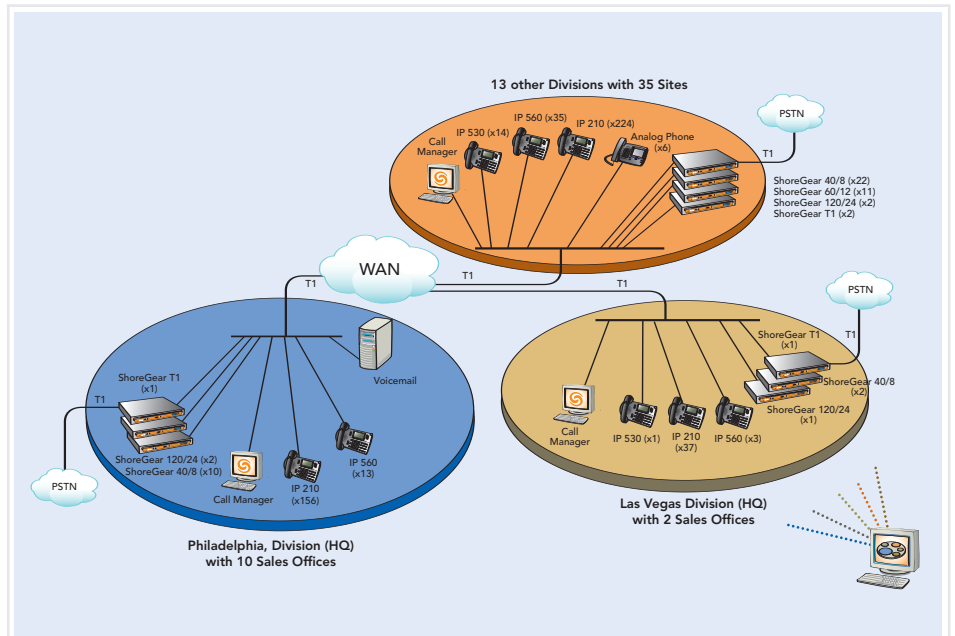


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PHONES ARE ALWAYS ANSWERED: BETTER BUSINESS

The ShoreWare Auto-Attendant, also utilized by Anthony & Sylvan, provides 24-hour automated call answering and routing to improve service and enhance the company's image for inbound callers. Outgoing prompts can be customized and linked to the time of day and/or day of week. An individual group, such as sales, can also have its own menus with unique greetings and options. This is especially useful when callers dial the wrong office. For example, a sales office and a retail store can be in the same city, so all day long, the sales office could mistakenly be getting calls for the retail store. Therefore, with ShoreTel, the customers calling the sales office are greeted by an auto-attendant that directs their calls to the retail store with the press of a button. This self-help solution means employees don't have to spend time answering calls intended for another office. Anthony & Sylvan uses Auto-Attendant's on-hours and off-hours greetings as well as custom greetings.



Anthony Sylvan Pools deployed ShoreTel to 14 divisions including 50 sites and 500 users.

“Auto-Attendant and the ability to transfer calls provides a huge benefit, especially since the old system didn't allow the transfer of calls between offices – we'd have to ask customers dialing the wrong location to hang up and dial another number, which is frustrating,” said Pizzelanti. “The ShoreTel system solved a significant business problem.”

Furthermore, Hurricane Rita forced a temporary shutdown of Anthony & Sylvan's Houston office, and Auto-Attendant made it easy to implement a custom schedule so that the ShoreTel system automatically played a special greeting for callers dialing those locations.

Anthony & Sylvan also utilizes ShoreTel's hunt groups capability, which allows multiple call routing options to ensure that live calls are answered by having primary and backup operators in the same—or a different—location. With hunt groups, when a person is on the phone or unavailable, calls are



routed to another extension, preventing customers from unnecessarily reaching voice mail. Calls can also be routed to the receptionist and if the receptionist doesn't answer, the call can then be sent back to the intended person's voicemail.

"We use hunt groups in a lot of locations, to ring multiple phones at the same time or in a sequence, to make sure a live person answers," said Meyerowitz. "The scheduling department, for example, uses hunt groups with sequential ringing, and also uses it to move calls between operators and administrators or voice mail as needed."

ANTHONY & SYLVAN HAPPY THEY JUMPED IN

Anthony & Sylvan is maximizing the capabilities of the ShoreTel system. While it has yet to implement SoftPhone and some other features ShoreTel offers, those are not far away. The company's new AT&T WAN was implemented in April 2005, and the ShoreTel installation, which was planned in phases, began shortly thereafter.

"We have been working on getting the new system up and getting everyone onto it," said Meyerowitz. "The basic business problems have been solved by ShoreTel, which is fantastic. Next, we look forward to leveraging the features and functions we haven't tapped into yet. We're excited about future enhancements and plan to continue to work with ShoreTel to enhance telephony at Anthony & Sylvan."

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