

Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas



Big Brothers Big
Sisters of North Texas
Reaps Immediate
Measurable Gains
with ShoreTel Unified
Communications



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of North Texas



CHALLENGE

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas had disparate telephone systems at all of its offices. It needed a solution that would help tie all of its locations together, present a unified front to the outside world, reduce communications costs, and enhance productivity and customer service.

SOLUTION

- ShoreTel provided the volunteer organization with a complete IP Unified Communications (UC) solution, including ShoreGear switches, ShorePhone IP telephones, and ShoreWare Director for system management.

BENEFITS

- The ShoreTel system has tied all of the organization's remote locations together to present a unified front to the community.
- Streamlined business processes and new call management features have helped Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas increase the number of mentoring relationships by more than 34 percent over a two-year period while cutting the average wait time for clients to find a successful match almost in half.
- Least-cost routing saves the organization thousands of dollars a month in long distance charges.
- Financial contributions go much further with the ShoreTel UC system.
- The ShoreTel UC system allows more employees to work from home with the same robust Unified Communications features as if they were sitting at the corporate office. (See callout box for measurable improvements.)

Volunteer Organization Saves Money and Helps More Children Faster

Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas is the oldest, largest and most effective youth mentoring organization in Texas. The leader in one-to-one youth service for more than eighty years developing positive relationships that have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of young people, Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas mentors children, ages 6 through 18, in communities across North Texas. The organization's mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth. This mission is served through a professional staff that carefully works with both volunteers and children to ensure that the experience is one that is safe, fulfilling, memorable and fun for both the child and the volunteer.

The Need to Tie All Locations into a Unified Front

In 2004, Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas was faced with five regional offices that worked independently of one another, utilizing disparate phone systems (Panasonic and Samsung). The organization had delivered its

services via a professional staff working out of regional offices that relied on an outdated phone system that was not integrated. There was no single number callers could use to reach anyone in the agency, office lines were often busy, and the agency incurred long-distance charges when calling across area codes. In addition, staff and consultants were reluctant to use home or personal cell phones to keep in touch with the families and volunteers they served because of privacy concerns, which limited their availability and increased response time.

The organization's new technology plan included the integration of all five agencies into one cohesive unit, and the phone system was one of the driving forces of this plan. It was decided that Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas would investigate new Unified Communications solutions, and the organization pulled together a technology task force consisting of internal and external resources, as well as industry experts and board members.

"We needed to maintain consistent communications throughout the evaluation process," said Sean Ryan, director of information services for Big Brothers Big Sisters



“We knew we’d be getting better value for our money with ShoreTel. It fit into our infrastructure plans nicely and offered all of the features that would allow us to join all our offices together so we’d present a unified front to the outside world and improve internal and external communications.”

– Sean Ryan,

*Director of Information Services,
Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas*

of North Texas. “We started researching IP Unified Communications solutions, including Avaya and Cisco, and a trusted member of our technology committee, who was an expert in telecommunications, recommended ShoreTel®.”

The agency found that it could obtain a better product with a lower total cost of ownership with ShoreTel’s *Pure IP* Unified Communications solution.

“ShoreTel offered the distributed architecture and call management features we needed to connect our offices, present a single face to the outside world, and let our staff, consultants and volunteers work together far more effectively,” said Ryan “Over the last few years, our agency has grown into the largest mentoring agency in the country, and ShoreTel, as part of our complete technology overhaul, played a key role in that growth.”

With the help of its channel partner, Pyramid Communication Services, ShoreTel provided the organization with eight of its ShoreGear® 40 voice switches, as well as over 200 ShorePhone™ IP telephones for all of its sites. As the ShoreTel UC system was deployed, Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas added another two sites, so ShoreTel now covers all seven sites. The ShoreTel deployment has turned separate locations into a cohesive organization with a centralized telephone system.

Savings Abound

ShoreTel’s ShoreWare® Director is a browser-based management interface that provides Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas with easy access to the system from anywhere on the network, enabling the management of every site, including voicemail, automated attendant and desktop applications. It takes seconds to add a new user 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.

Major Gains with ShoreTel’s Unified Communications Solutions

The cost and call management benefits of the ShoreTel IP Unified Communications system have contributed to the following improvements at Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas:

- Mentoring relationships increased 35% (from 4,493 in 2004 to 6,054 in 2006).
- The average wait time for a match decreased 42% (76 days from 130 days).
- The agency was able to reduce its office space from 30,000 square feet to 14,000 square feet.
- The number of at-home workers has increased from 20 to 50 due to Call Manager’s Office Anywhere capabilities.
- The service cost per child has dropped from \$1,298 to \$1,190.
- Interviewers increased the average number of interviews they could conduct in a week from five to 20.

– Estimates provided by Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas

In addition to the ease of adding new users, the ShoreTel UC system is simple and cost-effective to maintain. “The time it takes for system management is a fraction of what it was before,” said Ryan. “I am talking literally minutes versus hours or days.”

The agency has a goal of servicing 15,000 children in the community by 2010, having served over 6,000 in 2006, and according to Ryan, the ShoreTel UC system will allow them to reach this goal. “We’re one of the fastest growing and the largest agency in the country,” said Ryan. “We rely on financial contributors to do the invaluable work we do and we are sensitive to that. With the savings we glean with ShoreTel, as well as the communication, customer service, and productivity improvements, our contributors know that we’ve invested wisely and we’re making our budget go much further than we could before.”



“Keeping costs down is important to us, and with ShoreTel solutions, the long distance savings has allowed us to redirect those funds to supporting our program. We estimate the savings are several thousand dollars per year. This translates to money we can use for supporting at-risk children in our community.”

– Sean Ryan,

*Director of Information Services,
Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas*

Employees Can Work Anywhere

Office Anywhere is a feature of ShoreWare Call Manager that allows employees to choose their device - for instance, a cell phone or home phone - and that device assumes the identity and capabilities of his or her regular office extension. Staff and consultants can now dial from any home or cell phone but still pass along the caller ID of the agency. This protects the privacy of the staff and helps them be more responsive. When people in the community see the call is from Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas, not a stranger, they are more likely to take the call. Office Anywhere has also helped the agency more than double the number of at-home workers, resulting in a savings on office space of several thousand dollars per year, which translates into more money for supporting at-risk children.

"Office Anywhere has been a difference maker for us," said Ryan. "I cannot recall releasing an application that was so easy for the users to learn. We were prepared to commit weeks to train and support this release. It took two days. Nobody could believe how easy it was, including me."

Office Anywhere also enables seamless participation in workgroups, hunt groups, and contact centers, and it provides the organization with a cost-effective method of pulling in small branch locations and home offices. Half of the organization's staff works remotely, which provides many benefits: There is no need to set up an expensive office; employees can work from home or anywhere they can get an Internet connection, which makes them more productive and available; and customer service is noticeably improved because someone is always available.

"Office Anywhere has had a tremendous impact on our organization," said Ryan. "It has given us the ability to support our social workers where they work in the communities we serve," said Ryan. "ShoreTel solutions make it possible to extend our enterprise to every one of our locations—this localization improves our reach and helps us provide consistency and assurance of who's calling to each individual involved in our cases—volunteers, children, social workers and other providers. If an employee works from home, caller-ID says it's Big Brothers Big Sisters

calling. With so many telemarketers calling people today, our ability to brand our caller ID from any phone really makes an impact on first time answers. We also are able to consolidate all of our long distance calls and save money because every long distance call is made through the central ShoreGear switch—even calls made by those remote workers. Office Anywhere is a powerful feature."

Workgroups Capabilities Ensure Callers Reach a Person

Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas is also utilizing the workgroups capabilities in ShoreWare Personal Call Manager, which enables it to consolidate specific inquiry calls to one number, and calls are routed to the next available staff member. The organization has specific workgroups dedicated to such groups as customer service and receptionists. Personal Call Manager also provides basic reporting capabilities to help measure call volume and make work schedule changes as necessary.

"There's no guarantee that first-time callers will call back if they end up in voicemail, so it's important that the people we serve reach a real person when they call in," said Ryan. "The workgroup feature helps us make sure that happens. ShoreTel helps us provide the highest level of caring and quality service to our customers."

Employee Productivity Enhanced

ShoreTel UC systems are easy to use, simple to manage, flexible, and reliable. With the ShoreTel UC system in place, all employees are now on the same phone and voicemail system, using 4-digit dialing to reach employees at any location and dialing co-workers by name. The least-cost routing capabilities also allow the organization to minimize costs by avoiding toll charges. (See callout box for additional improvements due to the ShoreTel UC system.)

"Keeping costs down is important to us, and with ShoreTel's solutions, the long distance savings has allowed us to redirect those funds to supporting our program," said Ryan. "We estimate the savings are several thousand dollars per year. This translates to money we can use for supporting at-risk children in our community."



“The bottom line is that ShoreTel has provided us with the ability to improve our business processes, be consistent across all of our locations, and deliver the best quality service to our clients.”

– Sean Ryan,

*Director of Information Services,
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Personal Call Manager is integrated tightly with employees’ Microsoft Outlook® so they enjoy unified messaging, such as directory dialing, contact screen pop, and calendar integration. Employees can quickly type in a name, bring up a number, and make calls from local online directories—all with the click of a mouse, right from the desktop. With ShoreTel’s e-mail integration, employees can also manage their e-mail and voicemail centrally right from their desktops, and voicemail messages can even be attached to e-mail messages for forwarding.

“Calling a colleague at any location is so easy to do and employees appreciate that,” said Ryan. “Our offices are spread over several hundred miles, so now cost to call those offices is not a factor. We don’t even have to use the keypad anymore—you just enter a name into the Personal Call Manager. We’ve seen great productivity improvements.”

In addition, ShoreTel’s powerful Find Me feature allows employees to configure the system so that calling can track them down on any phone number they choose—for instance, on their cell phone or home phone. If the employee does not answer any of the phones programmed into the system, only then does the call revert to voicemail. Find Me also allows voicemails to be sent as attachments directly to employees’ e-mail boxes so no caller’s question or issue will ever get lost.

Ready for Growth

Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas is prepared for its future anticipated growth of significantly increasing the number of children that the organization services because with the distributed nature of the ShoreTel UC system, scaling to add new locations is quick and easy. “Our agency has grown to be the largest agency in the country over the last few years,” said Ryan, “and there’s no doubt that ShoreTel has played an important role towards our ability to grow to where we are today.”

The organization is also ready for any unexpected events. “Disaster recovery contingency planning is very important to us,” said Ryan. “ShoreTel has provided us with the ability to be able to respond to any kind of outage by routing calls to another location. The distributed nature of the solution was impressive to us because we need to always have a backup plan.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas is happy with its choice of ShoreTel for its Unified Communications needs. “ShoreTel has facilitated a culture change for us,” said Ryan. “Instead of having separate independent silos for each location, we’ve integrated all of our communities into one unit. We are now able to meet the goals of delivering social services to our communities in a much better way. The bottom line is that ShoreTel has provided us with the ability to significantly improve our business processes, be consistent across all of our locations, and deliver the best quality service to our clients.”