



How IP Telephony Helps Saves Lives

Posted on: 08/28/2006, <http://www.phoneplusmag.com/hotnews/68h289352562784.html>

LiteScape and Greene Memorial Hospital Form a Healthy Technology Partnership

By Rod Hamlin, EVP Sales and Marketing at LiteScape Technologies

Greene Memorial Hospital has won many awards for its medical care over the years, and it's a lot easier being a patient there today, now that LiteScape Technologies has helped install productivity software applications along with their state-of-the-art Cisco IP telephony network.

Before Cisco and LiteScape, the regional not-for-profit hospital outside Dayton, Ohio, relied on 18-year-old phone switches based on hosted equipment and an outdated ATM.

"We were twilighted," explains Doug Potts, senior networking telecom manager at Greene Memorial. "The phone system was old and unable to be upgraded to current technology in order to fit our business needs."

As the sun set on its phone technology, Greene Memorial saw its productivity and efficiency drop too. When a nurse needed a doctor on the floor, she would talk with the nurse secretary, who called the hospital operator, who paged the doctor; the doctor eventually responded to the hospital operator, the call was then transferred to one of the nursing desks and then the nurse secretary would track the nurse that need the doctor down.

Boosting Productivity

Potts and others realized that Greene Memorial needed to provide quicker clinical care. "We had to streamline nurses' ability to do their jobs," says the telecom manager. "We had to connect them to the doctors more easily."

After getting Greene Memorial's board to approve a \$1.5 million telecom/network overhaul, Potts and his team of three went to work on the phased project.

Five years ago, they replaced the ATM network with a switch gigabit network that allowed them to move everything to a common standard. "We started building from the ground up a number of years ago," recalls Potts. "But the end goal was always to install VoIP. We had been planning this for a number of years. Over time we centralized all of the network core and telecommunications equipment in the same areas in order to leverage the locations when the time was right."

While steadily increasing redundancy each year in support of IP, Potts and his team finally were able to make VoIP a reality for Greene Memorial in 2004.

"We established a solid communications infrastructure that standardized all technology and was much easier to support," explains Potts, who got an outside implementation assist from a Minneapolis, MN-based re-seller named Wirespeed, now called Analyst International. "And being able to deploy wireless resulted in a lot of saved time for nurses, doctors and other people at the hospital."

Today, Greene Memorial's VoIP network allows nurses to talk to doctors whenever and wherever they are needed. This has cut turnaround time at the hospital significantly, according to Potts. "We're delivering a much quicker response and better patient service," he says. "This contributes to saving lives, too."

Saving on Operating Costs

It's also contributed to a major drop in operating costs at Greene Memorial. As they ramped up to VoIP, Potts and his team consolidated eight phone switches into one so that the hospital's communications became unified and efficiencies kicked in.

As part of the operating budget-reduction process, Potts sought a way to monitor and control long-distance costs at Greene Memorial. "We wanted to run reports on each call and be able to charge back to the individual departments," he explains. "That kind of measurability and accountability was really important to us." After talking to several phone manufacturers, who were unable to offer a workable solution, Potts turned to LiteScape.

Improving Patient Service

To solve the hospital's long-distance problem, Potts deployed CallTrack PRO, another collaborative communications product from LiteScape. Professional services and law firms have long used this product to simplify the chargeback of calls to clients. Call Track PRO provided Greene Memorial with automated tracking and billing of all long-distance calls and drastically reduced long-distance costs.

"LiteScape had the perfect products," says Potts. "They met our needs and brought what we needed."

The objective was to help Greene Memorial in three key ways – boosting staff productivity, saving on overhead costs and improving customer service. The Cisco infrastructure and LiteScape solutions have been pretty successful in helping the hospital attain these objectives.

The healthy technology partnership between Cisco, Wirespeed, LiteScape and Greene Memorial also shows the ever-expanding potential of the IP telephony revolution.

Approximately 80 percent of all companies are using VoIP services; an additional 14 percent have plans to do so soon; and 40 percent are running video over IP. According to IDC, the market for enterprise VoIP infrastructure should reach about \$8 billion by 2008; meanwhile, InfoTech predicts that the enterprise market for VoIP applications will hit approximately \$3 billion next year.

Enhancing the Value of IP Telephony

Enterprises like Greene Memorial know that IP telephony systems can dramatically change the way business communications take place. And that's why they are buying IP phones from suppliers like Cisco and Avaya. But, to enhance fully the value and intelligence of their IP-based networks, companies need software solutions that provide secure, personalized collaboration and communication. They also need help connecting disparate vendors and platforms; they have to find a way to unify communications and link any information source to any phone or mobile device.

Customers like Doug Potts and Greene Memorial are optimizing an IP telephony investment at both the top- and bottom-line levels so the return on this cutting-edge technology can be fast and full. One of the most important ways to do this is through applications that unifying an enterprise's communications. That's the future. And it's happening now.

About the author

Rod Hamlin owns worldwide sales and marketing activities for Litescape, leveraging more than 19 years of experience in the enterprise, telecommunications and wireless technology markets. He's headed sales and marketing for such companies as JRG Software (acquired by CDC Software), Nuance Communications, Freei Networks (acquired by NetZero), Onyx Software and Saros Corp. (acquired by FileNET). Rod began his career at IBM and holds a bachelor's degree from Pacific Lutheran University, and attended the master's in business administration program at Seattle University.

