

IPC SOLUTIONS TELECONFERENCES WITH ASTERISKNOW™



CASE STUDY

ASTERISK

OVERVIEW

It began when a manager within a significant Australian governmental department complained that their externally hosted teleconferencing facility was costing the department around \$250,000 per year. “He mentioned that he was considering purchasing an audio conferencing solution from a big-box vendor that would cost over \$100, 000,” says Michael Knill, founder and director of IPC Solutions Pty Ltd located in Canberra, Australia. “I jokingly said that I could build him one for free using Asterisk, and was quite surprised when he agreed to let me do it.”

Australia’s IPC Solutions Saves Client \$100,000 in Audio Conferencing Using AsteriskNOW

In a comprehensive version of Asterisk designed for consultants, systems integrators, and application developers like IPC Solutions, AsteriskNOW is a free Open Source software framework, sponsored by Digium, that makes it easier for a technician to build a customizable telephony system by installing from disk, the required components to turn a common computer into a telecommunications server. Those elements include a complete Linux operation system, the free Asterisk software, the DAHDi driver framework, and your choice of no GUI or the FreePBX administrative GUI.

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Although he had not taken on such a large and high profile project before, Knill was confident Asterisk was the right solution. He held an operational role with the department in building a customized enterprise-level Unified Communications (UC) system with over 8,000 phone extensions. “When they said ‘You’ve got the job’ so quickly, I realized how compelling the potential savings were. From zero dollars to \$100,000 was not a hard calculation for them,” Knill laughs.

Most conferencing systems have a tendency to be proprietary and difficult to customize. Knill had used Asterisk to power a variety of client telephony solutions and had used the Asterisk conferencing application in the past. He knew the integration would be simple. Installed on a spare server, AsteriskNow was integrated to the existing PBX system via a SIP trunk.

Knill says he spent most of his time testing and pushing Asterisk’s limits to make sure it remained stable under a number of different scenarios; whereas installing Asterisk and programming it to work was a relatively quick process. After load testing and functional testing to try to break it, he released it to a pilot group who returned positive feedback.

IPC Solutions is a champion of Open Source telephony solutions, and is partial to Asterisk. In July 2006, Knill started the company because although he was seeing more and more small, medium, and large businesses using Asterisk, he also felt there were a lot more businesses throughout Australia that would benefit from an Asterisk-based system because of its flexibility and versatility.

“With most conferencing solutions, you need to book conference resources, often through a dedicated administrator. With Asterisk I was able to build a completely dynamic solution where every person in the department had their own conference room number (their phone extension) and could choose any PIN they wanted.” He says anyone can initiate a conference by just sending a meeting request to all attendees providing the main pilot number, room number (usually the initiators’ extension number) and a PIN of their choice. “When the first person joins the conference, they set the PIN for the rest of the attendees. The caller is asked to confirm the PIN to ensure it is correct.” Knill also wrote an XML application for internal users desk phones that display the conference participants.

When last checked, the department was averaging around 20 conferences a day and after more than two years since it was implemented, the current onsite voice engineer says it is one of the most reliable communication systems in the department, according to Michael Knill. Even better from the client’s standpoint — it paid for itself in less than a month with minimal support costs. Compare that to a \$100,000+ big-box solution!



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