



Strategic Health Care of Santa Barbara Saves Thousands: Lower TCO Right Out of the Box with Digium Switchvox and Asterisk

OVERVIEW

On the surface, a new telecommunications system wouldn't have appeared to be a priority need for Strategic Health Care in Santa Barbara, California. Unlike many companies still struggling to convert an old analog system to a web-centric VoIP system, Strategic Health Care was already operating a sophisticated, up-to-date IP-based telecommunications system. Sophisticated that is, until they factored in costs. "It was very expensive," explains Cevin Doppmann, network engineer for Strategic Health Care, an information intelligence solution offering real-time analytical data for the healthcare industry. "For two years, we had been outsourcing an IT-based system called Clear Star to Impulse Advanced Communications. The costs were enormous - between \$70 and \$80 per user per month." With a staff of close to 40 employees, Strategic Health Care sought a replacement system that would cut these costs significantly and bring their telecommunications in-house.

After the company conducted extensive research on available telephony products and services, Digium's Switchvox became their top choice. Among the reasons for selecting Digium was the flexibility of the Switchvox Unified Communications solution - the family of IP PBXs delivers web interface applications directly to the telephone handset. Known for its user-friendly edge with administrators, it also has a price point advantage. Unlike many of its competitors, the business-critical features that businesses require today are already included in the price of the appliance, rather than priced separately as add-on features.

Another important factor was that Switchvox is based on Asterisk, the world's most flexible and widely used communications platform. It provides highly competitive features that far outreach proprietary telephone systems in terms of power, and is available at a highly competitive price as well. The open source Asterisk software can turn an ordinary computer into a communications server. "We are now looking at a cost of \$70 per year, as opposed to \$70 per person per month - plus the cost of equipment," Doppmann says. "The savings off the top alone are impressive."

CHALLENGES

As a new addition to Strategic Health Care, Doppmann came onboard to implement the transition, after management had performed their research and due diligence in finding a new telecommunications system. An experienced network engineer, he was familiar with the Cisco Unity solution and its convergence-based communication services. "I wasn't familiar with Switchvox or Asterisk specifically, but I was loosely knowledgeable about the open source concept," he says. Management had considered several options including an in the cloud system and even renegotiating hosted costs with Clear Star; and they priced a variety of IP and web-based systems. When it came to reducing costs, the hosting option couldn't stand the scrutiny. When comparing features and price, Switchvox with Asterisk won out against all the competition. "They felt confident in their choice, but said that if I found a better solution or knew something they did not, they would be glad to hear me out. The truth is, the more I read about Asterisk and the Switchvox solution, the more certain I became that it was the right choice."

Strategic Health Care was able to eliminate more than \$2,100 (per month), or approximately \$25,000 a year in user fees alone, by replacing their existing phone system with the Switchvox solution. Working through a web portal, the previous application allowed the company's customer support team a number of conveniences they were not willing to forfeit in a new system. As Doppmann discovered, implementing Switchvox and Asterisk meant keeping those features the support team needed, while still being able to reduce costs.

"I do not mean to make it sound as though the Impulse system didn't have its share of technical issues, because it did. But the high costs of operating a system on an outsourced basis was definitely a priority for looking at new options," Doppmann says.

SOLUTION

Because Strategic Health Care is a relatively small company with the basic infrastructure in place to install another IP-based product, Doppmann purchased Switchvox SMB right out of the box. The simplicity of the solution meant he didn't need additional technical support for installation. "We kept our existing Polycom IP phones, but I was prepared to have to reconfigure our phone set-up and reset the entire phone system to Switchvox specifications." Doppmann admits to being pleasantly surprised when the process was straightforward and free from complications.

"One of the coolest things was that when I installed the Switchvox phone feature packs (PFPs) that came with the Switchvox PBX, Asterisk recognized them and all I had to do was plug in our Polycom phones and Asterisk linked them up without my having to reconfigure them manually."

The phone feature packs deliver many of the Switchvox Applications right to the handsets so you can immediately record a call, browse your voicemail, answer parked calls, and plenty more. "If you are a little primitive and still use faxes, I found it funny that such an advanced system still allows for little quirks like that where you can print a document to fax," adds Doppmann .

Another benefit for Strategic Health Care is that the open source Asterisk software allows the company to continue using their proprietary software. They do so by entering through a web portal where their customer support team can perform all their functions online, including building reports and documenting customer issues.

He is still learning a great deal about all the features the new system offers, and has found support lines and online help to be invaluable resources. Doppman says he has set up call queues and facilitated ring groups based on a tier system to make sure calls get routed to the right people. The company is currently using two call queues, and voicemail to email.

There are also aspects of the phone system that are still being implemented. "It has been easier to execute than I ever thought possible for such a high tech product," Doppmann says. "Not only is Switchvox flexible and expandable leaving us plenty of room to grow, but it has cut costs drastically, which was one of the main objectives of the project."

RESULTS

- Cost savings of more than \$25,000 a year in user costs
- Easy-to-use Polycom phone feature packs that have you up and running in minutes
- Additional features such as report-building, setting up call queues and ring groups, voice mail to email, etc., all enhance workflow and improve operations
- Digium technical support via online chats, videos and forums; as well as by telephone
- flexibility that integrates seamlessly with other components, assumes future expansion, and accommodates proprietary hardware and software

Digium's vision is a world based upon open communications.

Our mission is to transform the way businesses acquire and operate their communications systems through the application of open source software.



The Asterisk Company

Digium Headquarters

445 Jan Davis Drive NW
Huntsville, AL 35806 - USA

Phone: +1 256-428-6000

Fax: +1 256-864-0464

www.digium.com

