CULLMAN PRIMARY CARE MULTISPECIALTY GROUP

CASE STUDY   **SWITCHVOX**

OVERVIEW

Three years ago, Cullman Primary Care Multispecialty Group replaced multiple telephone systems used across their office locations with a single Digium Switchvox IP telephony solution. The decision not only solved a number of communications problems for the medical center but it also helped reduce telephone costs by 40 percent. Now, Cullman Primary Care is learning how they can continue to meet the growing demands of its expanding medical center and respond to calls for further customization, without investing in expensive upgrades common to proprietary phone systems, or sacrificing quality or technical support. Cullman Primary Care turned to Integrated Communications Solutions to help address the medical center's changing needs.

A Healthy UC Solution: Switchvox Improves Communications for Busy Medical Center

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Alabama-based Integrated Communications Solutions (ICS) specializes in providing medical industry professionals with simple VoIP solutions to complex IT problems. ICS president Darrell Reaves says, "At ICS, we believe you have to apply basic integrative engineering principles to any IT project. Most IT technology companies have a box of widgets they sell to a company's IT manager. When you do that, you keep the customer needy, always needing something else to make it all work together," he says, "By providing Cullman Primary Care with a Switchvox to service all their locations, we provided them with a centralized, integrated business communications system with one telephone number to call when they need something. We provide it, sell it, and support it."

Cullman Primary Care consists of multiple, community-oriented patient care centers and doctors groups throughout Cullman, AL. The busy medical center has approximately 100 employees working at the hospital, while about 80 employees work at other locations. Before making the switch to a single UC solution, each location had its own phone system. "They never knew who of their many phone vendors to call when they had a problem," Reaves explains. "Also, if someone called for a doctor at one facility, and that doctor was located at another, it was difficult to transfer the call because there was no transparency between the facilities. They had to give the caller a different number to call or transfer the call outside the system, overloading facilities and causing constant customer complaints of not being able to get through. In the emergency medical field, that was a huge disadvantage."

At the time ICS first began helping the medical center they knew it was only a matter of a few years before all of the phone systems used by Cullman Primary Care would be obsolete and they would have very little if any support available to them. "Having a single business system with the ability to connect all the facilities together and only one service provider to call if they had a need for support was very appealing to them."

Reaves says a hosted solution was initially considered but there were concerns about possible outages. If the network went down, both the voice and the data would be negatively impacted and that was not acceptable for a company in the emergency medical field.

ICS stepped in to show them how Switchvox was the perfect phone system for their needs.

"Not only did it solve their disparate telephone system problem, but it turned out to be just the beginning of the advantages," Reaves says. "It no doubt saved them a lot of money, but it fulfilled my company's promise to our customers — to provide a means for simplifying the complicated world of IT and telecommunications."

ICS Houses the Digium Switchvox

As part of ICS' service offering, they installed a Switchvox SMB 355 at their main Professional Building location to manage the system for Cullman Primary Care. ICS has 15 technicians available through a help desk to respond to all problems. "Setting them up with Switchvox required pruning their current IP network because they were set up for IP using data, but not voice," Reaves explains. "We were able to save them a lot of money by using the existing infrastructure, and simply installing POE switches. We also partitioned the network so we could set up a separate Virtual LAN (VLAN) network for data so we could keep voice separate."

ICS asked many questions and built call trees to depict graphically the calling responsibilities and the calling order all the facilities used internally. "They have 180 users, so it was very important to make sure we had the routing correct to contact management, doctors, nurses, and administrators." They operate multiple PRIs that work all day at about 80 percent capacity and have several auto attendants that route calls to eight operators. Some of the original older numbers are still actively in use, and are routed to specific operators. There is also a line designated for Spanish-speaking patients.

Features Now and in the Future

Internally, Cullman Primary Care administrators enjoy the most basic features like being able to pull up a screen and see who is calling, and they can even block calls and reroute them. Another big improvement is the ability to forward calls from any of the multiple locations, as though they were all in one location without the caller knowing any differently.

"A new feature being offered to Cullman Primary Care is the ability to automatically route calls based on caller ID," Reaves says. Although this may seem standard practice in today's IP environment, Reaves explains that many older people do not like auto attendants. "They have a hard time following the menus and do not like having to punch in a bunch of numbers and listen to multiple messages to reach their doctor or nurse. With Switchvox, we will program the route table with their caller ID so their call will go directly to their doctor or nurse without them having to go through the auto attendant. Older patients will really like that feature!"

CPC has been utilizing the Switchvox system for three years without a glitch, but now ICS is showing them how they could increase functionality using new system features made available to Switchvox customers since the medical facility's original installation. Some of those include mobile apps and the desktop fax application.

"When Digium launched their new Digium IP phone sets early last year, I knew they were a good fit for Cullman Primary Care," says Reaves. The Digium HD phones are easy to install and configure. Employees simply plug them in and they automatically find the Switchvox server, making it easy to start using them right away.

One benefit, in particular, of Switchvox to administrators and other staff members is the use of desktop call reporting. This feature allows them to monitor who is receiving the most calls, which helps them better manage operators. If the system is too weighted in one direction, they can reroute calls elsewhere.

Reaves admits it is sometimes hard to get new customers to access all of the advanced features available from a Unified Communications solution like Switchvox, but they try to make sure clients know what they are missing by training the trainer and giving them advanced user cheat sheets to go with the full user guide.

"So many companies nickel and dime their clients," he says. "Then, when they get ready to expand, like Cullman Primary Care is about to do, the price starts rising. That isn't the case with Switchvox. They continue to save while enjoying enhanced benefits with UC."

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