

RAINBOW ICT goes FULL VoIP

Step by step to greater flexibility

Like many companies, the question for Rainbow ICT was not "should we switch to IP telephony", but "how should we switch". This IT service provider for 3 major insurance companies in the end chose to implement a full VoIP solution in a step-by-step program that started in 2003 with 60 branch offices, and over the years has grown with the organisations' needs, to cover 5500 end users on different platforms by 2010.

"This phased migration let us minimise the impact on the production, and continue to provide complete service", explains Mark Scheers.



Mark Scheers, Production Manager, Rainbow ICT Services presented this case story at the BELTUG X-change May 4, 2010

CHALLENGES

Finding a future-proof solution that answers needs now

In 2003, P&V was making major changes to its branch offices. Logistically, they were being reduced from 150 to 60, while staff in each was increasing from an average of 3 to 7. But the role of the branch offices was evolving, too. Instead of offering direct, 'customer-oriented' services, they instead became 'logistical local support' for the mobile account managers who worked with the clients.

A new telecoms solution would need to be implemented, offering possibilities the previous PBX system didn't. As the ICT infrastructure service provider for P&V, Rainbow ICT developed a list of criteria, including centralised telephony management and reporting; integrated communications between HQ (which would not implement the new solution) and branches; and location-independent phone numbers (especially for mobile staff). Finally, the solution had to be 'future-oriented', leaving room to evolve and grow. Rainbow considered three options: full IP, hybrid IP-TDM and full TDM. While the full IP had a higher initial cost, the recurrent costs were much lower, as communications between HQ and branches would reside on the network.

“Full VoIP had a better 5-year ROI than hybrid or full TDM solutions. The phased migration let us minimise the impact on the production environment, and continue to provide complete service”



Rainbow ICT Services is the exclusive IT provider for three major insurance companies: P&V group, Delta Lloyd Life and DIB. It is responsible for all infrastructure and supporting services (first, second and third line. It currently supports approximately 5,500 end users for all platforms: central and decentral, network (LAN&WAN), workstations and peripherals, central printing, converting, and purchasing. Rainbow ICT is being phased out at the end of 2010, and each insurance company/group will take over its own services and staff.

SOLUTIONS

Step-by-step wins the race

To ensure continuous service for the offices, Rainbow did a step-by-step implementation. “We always had a fallback”, explains Mark Scheers. A Proof of Concept was set up in a simulated branch office. Then a pilot was carried out in 3 real branch offices. “We started with about 60% adaptation, so if there were any big problems, operations could continue”. But working closely with convergence specialist Quentris, the implementation was a success. A few years later, the acquisition of another insurance company resulted in a business case for IP telephony in the HQ, as well. This approach has allowed the organisation to adapt its telephony systems as new events occur in this volatile sector.

LESSONS LEARNT

Think before you act, to get it right the first time

“Switching is expensive, and it can be hard to convince your end-users to adapt their behaviour, so if you don’t need to change, it isn’t really worthwhile,” says Mark Scheers. “On the other hand, it does give much greater flexibility to your mobile workers!”

He insists that it is important to keep the end-users in mind: “They see telephony as a commodity, but it isn’t. It’s technically complex, and has a broader impact than they realise. So the IT department must be 100% certain of the implementation and choices: you have to get it right the first time!”