

Johnson Controls keeps managing Managed Voice

As challenges evolve, so do company's answers

Creating a global telecoms contract with a single, central supplier was only the start of the story for Johnson Controls. While the advantages were clear -- flexibility, leveraging of global volumes and freedom for IT staff to focus on core business – the complexity of the solution created new and evolving challenges. These included the company's relationships with the provider, with 3rd party suppliers and even with some of Johnson Controls' own sites. But the company takes these challenges in stride, moving forward to address each.



Peter Van Beek, Team Leader Voice Services Johnson Controls presented this case at the X-change on International Voice Communications Management, December 15

CHALLENGES

Flexibility of managed voice keeps company on the go

"Managed voice was the right way for us to go – and still is", says Peter Van Beek, Team Leader Voice Services, Johnson Controls. "Many of our people work at sites on our customers' premises. When the customer needs the space, our people have to move. This happens a lot! Managed service means our people can plug right back in, and we need that flexibility". In 2000, Johnson Controls signed a managed services agreement for its PBX office phone system with a provider offering global reach and solutions. Within the agreement, Johnson Controls pays monthly per active user port, and the provider is responsible for hardware, software and maintenance & changes. What's more, all equipment is to be replaced to a single platform. But while the solution has answered the company's flexibility and financial needs, Peter has seen that challenges don't just disappear once the contract is signed.

“When dealing with 3rd party supplier topics, remember: when you outsource a problem, you don’t have a solution. You have an outsourced problem. The problem still exists.”



Johnson Controls is a truly global company, with more than 130,000 employees at 1,300 worldwide locations in 125 countries. It is active in the automotive, building and power solutions sectors. Its vision is to help create “a more comfortable, safe and sustainable world”. To support its efforts, Johnson Controls’ IT organisation operates on three levels: local IT, business unit IT and Corporate IT. Corporate IT includes Global Infrastructure (GI). GI’s voice product portfolio covers Office Phone Services, Carrier Services, Conferencing Services, Mobile Voice Services, Mobile Data Service and local trunk services.

SOLUTIONS

New solutions can mean new challenges, too

“We face issues with the provider, our own sites and 3rd party suppliers,” Peter explains. “With the provider, the challenges evolved: first we had to drive the service across all sites. Then, we moved into managing the complexity of the account. Finally, technology options and challenges crop up that didn’t exist when the contract was signed.” Other challenges come from within: “Not all sites see the benefits, and want to keep their existing systems. We prefer to persuade sites since forcing them to change simply leads to more complexity down the road.” Finally, dealing with the fewest local suppliers has its challenges as well. “The 3rd parties are their responsibility, but our problem,” comments Peter. “When something goes wrong, we have no control over them.”

LESSONS LEARNT

Use what you learn – and keep thinking!

Moving forward Johnson Controls will incorporate the lessons they have learned into the next generation Phone solution. “This solution will be a more integrated solution, so sites who have stay out will clearly lose a major number of unified collaboration benefits.”, says Peter. “We also want more control over 3rd party suppliers. Sometimes it’s even 4th or 5th party! We don’t want a provider outsourcing to a supplier we wouldn’t work with”. As for technical evolution: “We’re thinking about that a lot!” smiles Peter. “We know we want to incorporate a refresh, but it’s very complicated. I do want it to cover both devices and systems.” As a final comment, Peter says: “If you want an international communications management solution, think it through. There is a time to consider and a time to act. Don’t rush the planning phase.”