

SITA Recycling Services: From TDM to SIP

Timing is key for future-proofing communications

“When you make decisions about communications technology, you always have to consider both your current needs and your future needs,” says Tom Van Wint, Helpdesk and Telecoms Manager at SITA Recycling Services, a subsidiary of the SUEZ Group. Based on that philosophy he has managed to turn a mix of incompatible equipment into a workable, centralised communications system – while keeping control over implementation costs. His secret? Using IP and SIP as a foundation, and slowly migrating all new equipment to these standards.



Tom Van Wint, Helpdesk and Telecoms Manager, first presented this case story at the BELTUG X-change of 24 November 2010.

CHALLENGES

Bringing consistency and compatibility to a mix-and-match system

When SITA moved to VoIP five years ago, the need for it was clear. The 70 sites across Benelux and Germany used a communication set-up that was a hodgepodge of PBXs and different service providers. With a call manager that broke down regularly and an IP-Centrex environment with very bad data lines, trunking was a problem. “We migrated to a homogenous, hybrid TDM-IP system,” explains Tom. “This also allowed us to reuse some of our existing equipment, like 500 telephones and some of the PBX cards. That really adds up!” The company set up two centralised nodes, the primary one in the Netherlands and a back-up node in Belgium. In addition to offering redundancy, it offers the company flexibility for future decisions about communications. “If we ever decided to split up the Dutch and Belgian communications, the nodes would be ready.”

"We knew for three years in advance that we would move to SIP, so whenever existing equipment was depreciated, we replaced it with new, SIP-compliant equipment."

Tom Van Wint, Helpdesk and Telecoms Manager, SITA Recycling Services



SITA Recycling Services is a subsidiary of SUEZ Environment, part of the French GDF SUEZ group. With 65,895 employees and a worldwide presence, SUEZ Environment and its subsidiaries provide innovative solutions to millions of people and industries in the drinking water, wastewater treatment and waste management fields.

SITA NEWS covers Benelux and Germany. In Belgium, the company has about 2,600 staff members spread over 50 sites. In all, it is responsible for collecting the waste of more than 50,000 companies and 3.8 million inhabitants, using a fleet of 1,100 trucks and 165,000 containers.

SITA has long been a pioneer in the field of sustainability. By 1972, it was already focussed on recycling and environmentally-friendly waste treatment. Its strategy is to use today's waste to create the raw materials for tomorrow's products.

SOLUTIONS

Plan, prepare and test for success

Tom always keeps an eye on the future. "When we first centralised our system, SIP trunking was still in an 'early adopter' phase, but it was clear it would be the solution to come. In fact, we knew for about three years before that we would move to SIP. So whenever we bought new equipment, we made sure it was SIP-compliant." This forward-thinking showed its true value when SITA made the decision to migrate to SIP trunking. "Our IP usage was exploding, especially applications like video conferencing and voice conferencing. Everything goes through the main nodes. Now, it all goes over one line, too." This new system includes greater redundancy, with two trunks to each node plus VMS, as well as a GPRS link. "We took our time to test everything: first fax, then the full commitment, then QoS." Tom explains that it's rather like a Cloud, supporting voice, data, video conferencing and legacy systems like fax - even mobiles phones. "Right now, numbers still come through the TDM, but we are ready to cut over."

LESSONS LEARNT

Forward-thinking lets solution fall into place

"As with other technologies, you shouldn't adopt SIP just for its own sake, nor to cut costs. It doesn't have a financial benefit, although you can cut costs elsewhere, like renegotiating TDM contracts. But on the operating side, it makes things a lot easier: no more links to the server, everything organised and working together. If you don't rush but you do plan ahead, SIP will fall into place." SITA still faces hurdles, however. "Even though we have put together a homogenous system, operating internationally remains a challenge, because of the diverse regulatory environments. So while we use Belgacom in Belgium, and KPN in the Netherlands, the laws regarding issues like fixed versus mobile providers and services are different. And the situation in Germany adds more complexity. You have to be prepared to work within those types of constraints."