

CNET NETWORKS+SHORETEL

CNET Networks calls on ShoreTel IP to provide cost savings, increased employee productivity, and high quality of service



Challenges:

CNET Networks was consolidating several offices into a single headquarters in San Francisco, which initiated the phone system upgrade, that later expanded to all 1,600 employees.

ShoreTel Solution:

A ShoreTel IP telephony system was deployed to 1,600 employees across its eight offices. The distributed phone system provides local voicemail, auto-attendant, a converged conference bridge, and IP phones with an easy-to-use interface.

ShoreTel Benefits:

- Employee productivity gains
- Integrated audio conferencing
- Rapid ROI by eliminating cabling
- Cut costs tenfold with in-house conferencing

Office consolidation, phone system consolidation

CNET was consolidating a number of offices into a single headquarters in San Francisco, which also meant consolidating into a single phone system.

System that would endure over the long term

Although CNET covers all aspects of the technology world, the company faced its own high-tech challenge a few years ago when it was selecting a new phone system. So it makes sense that a forward-looking company would turn to cutting-edge technology—in this case, IP telephony—as the best choice for the future.

"We knew that whatever we chose, we would have to stick with it for the next 10 years," says Don McGill, director of client services at CNET. The network chose ShoreTel.

"Deployment was really straightforward," says McGill. "Now when I talk to my counterparts in London, it sounds like they are right next door. They have all the same features, but they are 6,000 miles away."

McGill says prior to the company's consolidation, CNET was using a traditional PBX from Avaya and had considered IP telephony solutions from Cisco and Nortel. But for its big move, the company selected ShoreTel for its IP PBX.

ShoreTel provides reliable communications

CNET worked directly with ShoreTel to initially set up users in the San Francisco headquarters on the new IP PBX. The team found that the plug-and-play capability of the ShoreTel IP Phones greatly simplifies the installation process.

Users also enjoy all of the features. ShoreTel Communicator integrates with Microsoft Outlook, so that users gain control over voice and email messages. The ShoreTel SoftPhone brings phone capabilities to a desktop or a laptop, giving workers access to their enterprise telephony features from wherever they are working.

Powerful applications fuel efficiency

CNET employees also take advantage of the presence capability within the ShoreTel Communicator for Operators, which allows users to know who is on the phone, who is in a meeting, and who is out of the office. This information greatly aids in routing calls in the most efficient manner, even across multiple sites.

ShoreTel's Follow Me Find Me feature allows callers to find employees on their cell phones, something salespeople appreciate, according to McGill. The auto-attendant and hunt and workgroup capabilities also ease life for CNET. "We have a customer service group and an IT helpdesk group who deal with internal and external customers," McGill says. The ShoreTel system automatically distributes calls to people in these workgroups.

As a distributed organization, CNET is naturally a heavy user of conferencing. "We use a lot of audio conferencing, and as it turns out most of the callers are in our offices, so we brought the audio conference bridging in-house and use our WAN as the transport," McGill says. "We have achieved significant cost savings with conferencing and users like the integration."

Reliable operation, easy management

McGill says that overall his company has experienced very few problems with its VoIP system, mostly due to the reliable nature of ShoreTel's distributed architecture. "We've had occasional problems, such as a server that affects voicemail in one of the offices going down, but the server at headquarters automatically took over for the remote location," he says.

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Don McGill, Director of Client Services
CNET Networks

With ShoreTel, there is no single point of failure for dial tone. Call management is distributed to each and every ShoreTel Voice Switch, making the system independent of LAN and WAN service interruption. Since the voice switches behave as peers on the network, they deliver a single phone system that spans multiple sites, breaking down communications barriers and easing administration. In the unlikely event of a catastrophe, the system is equipped with multiple levels of failover.

ShoreTel Success Story

As CNET hires more employees, adds, moves, and changes of phones are accomplished quickly and easily without taxing CNET's telecom staff or needing the assistance of an integrator. Management is just as easy. McGill and his staff can manage all sites from any web browser using ShoreTel Director, including the PBX, voicemail, automated attendant, and desktop applications.

Productivity gains and immediate cost savings of more than \$100,000

CNET has definitely reaped many benefits from the ShoreTel deployment—including a return on investment (ROI) from day one. "When we deployed ShoreTel in the new building in San Francisco, we eliminated the need for the typical telephone riser cable, which saved about \$100,000 right away," McGill says. He adds that selling the company's two-year-old Avaya phone system netted the company additional dollars. "When you add everything up, we had payback on the ShoreTel system the day we moved in."

On the productivity side, McGill says that the user interface on the ShoreTel IP Phones is much easier to use than a traditional phone. "People don't dial anymore; they use the Call Manager client to do all the telephone work, which provides call histories, caller ID, and gives employees total control over their calls," McGill says.

Reducing reliance on costly conference calling services was another significant cost savings. When ShoreTel Converged Conferencing was initially installed, CNET used 100,000 minutes

per month of calling time for conference calls, which racked up charges of \$15,000 to \$16,000 a month. "Now, we've increased the usage to 160,000 conferencing minutes a month, but the costs are down to a couple of thousand dollars," says McGill.

"We didn't choose ShoreTel because it was VoIP," concludes McGill. "We liked the feature set and the way it was presented on the PCs rather than having to remember the esoteric codes on the phones. ShoreTel is straightforward to use for both users and for telecom staff. The fact that it was VoIP was just an added benefit."

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ShoreTel. Brilliantly simple business communications.

ShoreTel, Inc. (NASDAQ: SHOR) is a leading provider of brilliantly simple IP phone systems and unified communications solutions powering today's always-on workforce. Its flexible communications solutions for on-premises, cloud and hybrid environments eliminate complexity, reduce costs and improve productivity.

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