
PUTTING UC TO WORK

SAVING MONEY AND RESOURCES
FOR CHICAGO-BASED CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY CENTER



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Overview

With four locations in the Chicago metro area and affiliates throughout the United States, Ounce of Prevention promotes early childhood education programs for vulnerable young children age 6 weeks to 6 years. Having an advanced communications system to connect with their locations is an important part of their business, but budget had become a driving factor in the type of phone system they used. Originally, operating a managed VoIP phone service seemed like a convenient solution, but over time, monthly costs had begun to pile up. Their contract with the hosted provider, Cimco was up for renewal. It was time to explore other options. The not-for-profit organization turned to their trusted IT reseller, Dynamic Solutions Group (DSG) to help them find a solution that would relieve them from the \$20,000 a month they were spending for business communications between their four Chicago-area locations.

Moving From Hosted VoIP to a Full-featured, Premises-based UC Solution

DSG helps businesses make affordable design, maintenance, service, and support decisions for all of their business technology with a core goal of empowering Information Technology (IT) to drive greater business value while improving operational efficiencies. “Our products and services cater to high end businesses,” says Sean Conwell, senior systems engineer for DSG. “We use Digium Switchvox internally and liked it so much, we became a reseller. Since we started reselling Switchvox, we have seen sales soar, topping \$741,000 in sales last year.”

DSG showed the nonprofit agency how they could cut costs in half with a Switchvox Unified Communications system.

By offering Switchvox, recognized as the leading UC solution for best value, DSG is able to help businesses make affordable design, maintenance, service, and support decisions for all of their business technology with a core goal of empowering Information Technology (IT) to drive greater business value while improving operational efficiencies. “Our products and services cater to high end businesses,” says Sean Conwell, senior systems engineer for DSG. “We use Digium Switchvox internally and liked it so much, we became a reseller. Since we started reselling Switchvox, we have seen sales soar, topping \$741,000 in sales last year.”

As Digium’s #1 reseller of Switchvox IP business and unified communications (UC) systems, DSG wrote a proposal showing the nonprofit agency how they could cut those costs in half with an investment in their own Asterisk-based Switchvox UC system. Built on the Asterisk open source platform and designed for interoperability and flexibility, Switchvox is an awardwinning UC system that provides businesses with a better way to communicate, with greater savings, and more productivity.

■ Challenges

Cimco, the hosted VoIP provider, didn’t allow Ounce of Prevention to use an outside vendor to provide service and support when they had problems with the VoIP system, which is not uncommon when using a hosted provider. As a result, DSG was unable to service and support the voice portion of Ounce’s IT operations. Switching from a hosted solution gave DSG an opportunity to consolidate data with voice by implementing a Switchvox solution that added more to their overall savings. For instance, depending on the location, Ounce was utilizing multiple T1 lines at each of the four locations, which were costing them at least another \$200 a month. “We utilized the VoIP infrastructure and Internet connection on which the Cimco service was running, but we eliminated those T1s and integrated all four locations onto a single network thanks to the power of Asterisk,” Conwell says. The operation let DSG accomplish its stated goal of providing better value and improving operational efficiency!

“Also with Cimco, they did not have many of the UC benefits available through Switchvox. For instance, they could not send voicemail to email and they used old analog POTs fax lines to retrieve some of the email. Eliminating those saves them another \$40 a month,” Conwell says. “They did not have any call reporting before, so being able to check call logs is a convenience they are adjusting to.” Previously, trouble tickets were internalized and submitted to Cimco, so Ounce of Prevention didn’t know when or if there were problems being reported from callers.

■ Digium Switchvox Solutions

DSG installed three Switchvox SMB 305 PBXs, one at each of three smaller locations; and installed one SMB 355 at a fourth location. The primary line has an IVR with an auto attendant that offers callers options to connect with staff by name or extension. Callers can also opt for the receptionist.

“It took us about a day at the smaller locations where there were fifty or fewer employees to do a full data cutover. We reprogrammed about two hundred phones one evening and used the weekend to spot check for any glitches.”

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Senior Systems
Engineer, DSG

In all, DSG moved more than 400 extensions from the hosted service to the premises-based Switchvox systems. They were even able to use some existing equipment for additional savings, according to DSG. “We really like the new Digium phone sets, and usually prefer using those with our customer installs because they are less expensive and do not require all the licensing; but Ounce had three hundred Polycom phones on hand that integrate easily with Switchvox, so we kept those.”

Conwell adds that many of the employees are interested in some of the new features, which they didn’t have with the old system. For instance, they are experimenting with apps for the

iPhone and the Android. DSG also developed a webpage for Ounce that provides a global directory of the company that can be quickly displayed on their switchboard panel interface in case a caller needs to be transferred to another extension or another location, or in case they ring the wrong extension.

Ounce will see a return on their investment after just nine months.

“Monthly costs were very high while using that hosted system and cost was a big factor,” Conwell concludes. “That \$20,000 a month has been cut to about \$10,000 and we have mentioned the other savings of \$200 here and \$40 there. Of course there were some initial purchases, but Ounce crunched the numbers and has told us they will see a return on their investment after just nine months.”

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