



Communications overhaul delivers more agile business for M&C Saatchi

Avaya IP Office and cloud-based Scopia video conferencing connect global agencies and boost effectiveness of collaborative projects

A global, modern advertising agency can look very much like a highly connected group of individuals: small, specialist teams, working from anywhere in the world, coming together on a planned or ad hoc basis to develop client solutions. They are held together by a common thread but remain resolutely independent.

M&C Saatchi is very much in this mould. Formed in London in 1995, the agency now numbers 27 offices around the world, from Los Angeles to New Delhi, Auckland to Sao Paulo. While the CEOs of each office meet regularly, the local account teams are encouraged to think and act local.

Challenges

- Create a robust, scalable communications infrastructure
- Encourage global take-up of video conferencing

Results

- Delivered a cost-effective, high-feature communications infrastructure
- Seen dramatic adoption of video conferencing

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Alistair Roberts - Head of IT, M&C Saatchi

To work effectively, and to bring the best out of its local talent, the global offices need a flexible approach to collaborative working. If it is to respond quickly to client demands, it needs to be able to bring teams together at a moment's notice, share content and involve its specialists.

Transformation agenda

Alistair Roberts is M&C Saatchi's head of IT. Roberts, who previously held a senior role at Imperial College London, was recruited in 2011 with a specific brief to refresh the IT and telecommunications infrastructure of the London head office and to ensure it could cater for the rapidly expanding needs of the business which has experienced a period of sustained growth.

“When I arrived the entire estate was run down and no longer capable of meeting the needs of the business. We had network capacity issues, ageing desktops, and ancient switches which were unable to support modern technologies and protocols. In terms of communications, the previous PBX system was out of contract and hadn't seen a software update in years. Everything needed looking at, but it was a question of priority.”

With a new business opening in a building opposite the London head office, bringing together a team of 12, Roberts spotted an opportunity to start the transformation: “From my time at ICL I knew what an IP solution could do in terms of functionality and flexibility. But I also knew there would be a couple of ways of approaching this. ”The incumbent communications supplier, he says, did not quite see it the same way: “They didn't provide many options, and what they did recommend was prohibitively expensive, particularly for 12 users.

“We were impressed by the refreshing approach Charterhouse took to our communications challenges; focussing on the user experience first and foremost, and how this could be changed to benefit our business in the long term.”

Charterhouse Voice & Data, an Avaya business partner, suggested the IP Office 500, a flexible and scalable solution that offered the required unified communications options - for around one-fifth of the price. “The new office was only 12 users, but I immediately recognised this was a scalable, long term solution to a bigger issue. If it worked well here we could roll it out across the 600

users in London. What I didn't want was a solution that would become redundant when I came to tackle the wider business.”

Rapid response required

The issues surrounding the wider business were inescapable. As the solution was being implemented at the new office, the agency won a major new client: an international telecoms brand. This required the hiring of a new, 40-man client services team on the approach to Christmas.

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So the roll-out to the wider business began. Charterhouse Voice & Data mapped out the technical solution based on IP Office, says Roberts, and he put the business case to the CFO.

“The advertising business may appear to be all about talk, but at some point you require proof. Putting the 40 new users on so quickly was the proof management needed. We had most of the 600 users on the new system by Easter, and everybody by June.”

“We purposefully kept the initial roll-out simple. We didn’t load up too many features, but the beauty of IP Office is that we can add as required. We’re now more flexible, more compatible, and better able to respond quickly to clients’ needs”

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The roll-out has, he says, proved immensely popular. It has been simple to implement and, with minimal walk-through of the new features, easy for users to adopt. For the first time the agency has a robust communications infrastructure which spans multiple offices, timezones and continents. “It sounds simple, but the phones work. Users can send voicemail via email, ideal for those working out of the office; we now have caller ID, access to the global directory, and the means to hotdesk or work remotely.

We’re not having to install physical lines when we create new teams. What used to take all weekend can now be done in an afternoon.” “The impact of this is not just better working practice, but a renewed sense of belief in IT. The department had reputation and productivity issues when I arrived,” says Roberts. “We’ve tackled both.”

Video breakthrough

Alongside an overhaul of the telephony, Roberts had another communications issue: the agency’s use of video conferencing: “For an agency with such a global presence, we knew video was being underutilised.”

Using the Scopia Elite 5200 Multipoint Conferencing Unit (MCU) at the core of its cloud-based video solution, Charterhouse was able to knit together M&C Saatchi’s existing endpoint investments from two different vendors.

“We trialled this 18 months ago and since then the take-up has been a classic J-curve,” says Roberts. “We now have five endpoints, and employees clamouring to use video. We have teams doing weekly threeway calls between the Los Angeles-New York-London offices, another team opening up a new outsource business in India, and last month we recruited someone in New York entirely via video interviews. This will only grow.”

As the Scopia Elite MCU is based on industry standards, it can interoperate with video solutions from other vendors so that companies with existing equipment can protect and reuse that investment while providing additional services and functionality to a much broader employee base. This means it will be interoperable with any locally-acquired solution from one of the global offices, and also able to integrate client and agency details (contacts,

history, etc) via the integration with IP Office.

The Scopia solution also means account teams can share high definition video content, via video, with clients. The performance and ease of use have accelerated the take-up. Participants can join via room systems, at their desktop or even using iOS and Android devices over mobile and Wi-Fi networks. The result of HD video collaboration is faster decision-making, improved productivity and lower travel costs.



Building on this platform

The future, says Roberts, is to build on this platform. “The work we needed to do means we’ve got to an acceptable operating level. The next phase is to create a real competitive advantage.”

What this means is a roll-out of features across IP Office. Roberts wants presence indicators for all phones, and is looking at smartphone and tablet applications to create soft phones, possibly through Avaya one-X® Mobile: “We want employees to be mobile, but with the cost advantages of a desk phone. We also want the whole company to enjoy the benefits of video conferencing.

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rollout simple. We didn’t load up too many features, but the beauty of IP Office is that we can add as required.”

The original IP Office 500 has already expanded to include new users in New York and Stockholm, with Charterhouse’s consultancy skills helping scope out the planning and design of the worldwide roll-out. Roberts says further additions are planned, or new IP Office systems and functionalities will be added. On a broader scale, the agency plans to strengthen its global WAN, guaranteeing more secure links between sites.

“We’re now more flexible, more compatible, and better able to respond quickly to clients’ needs,” he says.

Products & Solutions

IP Office 500

Cloud-based Scopia video conferencing including desktop and mobile capabilities.

About M&C Saatchi

M&C Saatchi is an international advertising agency, founded in London in 1995. It has 27 offices in 18 countries, clients include Etihad Airways, Peroni, Adidas, Direct Line Insurance, Daily Mail and Boots.

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About Charterhouse Voice & Data

Established in 1993, Charterhouse Voice & Data is an independent, multi-award winning provider of voice, video, mobile, data connectivity and managed documents solutions and services. Our highly skilled experts create bespoke solutions that help businesses reduce cost, improve processes and enhance user experience.