Case Study

University Hospital Galway

Voice over IP migration proves popular with employees

Challenge

University Hospital Galway (UHG) is one of the major academic teaching hospitals in Ireland. On site, around 2,500 health service professionals had been using a telephone system made up of integrated PBX hardware that was starting to show its age.

"We were reaching a point where we would have to spend more money to keep it going or upgrade to Voice over IP [VoIP]," said Martin Murphy, Technology Manager, UHG. "It was a logical progression to migrate and I knew there were other benefits that the IP network could give us."

There was no single business driver for the upgrade, more of a large number of ongoing concerns with the legacy equipment which was becoming inflexible and too expensive to run and maintain, particularly when it came to adds, moves and changes. "Adding new phones or moving someone to a new desk was a cumbersome process and expensive, requiring onsite help from outside engineers," said Murphy.

A VoIP system would be easier to manage and open the door to other features and functionality such as Unified Communications.

BT was chosen to design, build and deploy the IP telephony solution, based around a Cisco call management system. This was completed in conjunction with a VLAN redesign which allowed for a best practice service with fewer potential points of failure.

Benefits

Rather than pursue a "rip and replace" approach, the decision was taken to migrate to the VoIP network in phases. After an initial pilot involving 30 people, Approximately 300 user have been migrated over the last number of months "For a large organisation like UHG, it made more sense to go for a gradual change management strategy, winning over minds, department-by-department," said Mark O'Reilly, BT Account Manager.

The recurring pattern with each phase was that users soon embrace the richer features that the IP system can deliver. Voicemail, for example, now goes straight into email. "No-one understood the benefits at first, until they discovered that they no longer had to transcribe recorded voice messages," said Murphy.

BT was subsequently asked to add a fax gateway so that voice, email and faxes would all go to the same inbox. The mailbox can be visible to multiple parties at the same time, creating a more collaborative working environment.

Video conferencing with desktop web cams is also proving popular. "People saw how simple it was and have really taken to it," said Murphy. "When you see someone in front of you on a screen, you have a different type of conversation with them."

Expensive adds, moves and changes are no longer an issue. When a user moves desk they just bring the phone with them, plug it in and it's up and running immediately.

"Users have made it clear that they wouldn't have the old system back," said Murphy, "and we now have a platform we can build on for the future and support advanced medical applications."