

## Turning Telephony into a Business Driver: Three Steps to Make it Happen

If you're not already telling upper management that they should be looking to their phones as a competitive advantage-you should be. The latest telecommunications technologies have shifted the ubiquitous telephone from a simple facilitator of communication to a true business enabler-one that is becoming a key component of every small-to-medium businesses' competitive strategy. To make your phones into enabling tools for the growth of your company, there are three basic steps to follow:

### Step 1: Foundation

The first step in deploying the newest telephony applications is to make sure your infrastructure is up to the challenge. Obviously, your system needs to be capable of integrating new software seamlessly, but it is preferable to deploy a system that already has ACD and wireless capabilities imbedded. It's much easier to deal with one vendor and support one platform than to try and get disparate technologies working together.

### Step 2: Enabling Applications

There are several telephony applications you can add that come under the umbrella of "enablers". You may think of the call center as an enabler and a great tool for customer acquisition-and it is. But what you may not realize is that even the smallest business can use applications such as voicemail, ACD and wireless to build customer loyalty and retention without a call center, by simply using the existing talent and resources your company already has in-house.

Automated Call Distribution can turn your employees into centers of opportunity. Callers can be directed straight to the knowledge resource that can help them as efficiently as possible, giving workers the ability to assist customers, answer their needs and engage in selling new business just as effectively as if they were a full-time customer support representative.

Add to that equation wireless and unified communication technologies, and an employee can be anywhere in the building or on the road, and an inbound caller can reach them directly through one number. The call will ring through to the employee's wireless handset or cell phone, with no noticeable lag in getting the customer connected. It's the ability to make any business seem like they have a large, fully-dedicated customer support staff.

To raise the bar even further, implement a Computer-Telephony Integration application to push business productivity to a whole new level. You can integrate common software such as your CRM application with your phone platform. Now, a customer service representative can pull up a customer record and dial their home phone number right from their computer. Or, when an inbound call comes in, the system can recognize the number and have all of the customer's files ready to be accessed by the representative.



### **Step 3: Monitoring Applications**

Finally, deploy monitoring applications to keep everything running smoothly. These applications enable you to measure everything from the performance of your phone system, to the performance of your employees, all right from any web-enabled device. Look at data such as calls processed per hour, peak call volumes per day and on-hold times to determine if your have any trunks that are over or underutilized, and adjust your network accordingly. Pass call-handling data to management to determine if any additional employee training is needed, or if new processes should be put into place to boost customer service. Through proper monitoring, you'll be able to see how much real ROI your new phone applications are delivering.

Telephony today is no longer a straight point-of-contact from customer to business. By following these steps, and making use of all the competitive advantages that the current applications are offering, you can turn your phones into a driver for growth within your organization.