

THE CAREY SCHOOL USES SWITCHVOX



CASE STUDY

SWITCHVOX

OVERVIEW

For more than 85 years, The Carey School has educated hundreds of children in San Mateo, California. The school, with classes for pre-kindergarten through the fifth grade, is home to 300+ curious, confident and joyful learners, teachers and staff in a strong independent school. Along with traditional academics, the school offers a broad range of before- and after-school enrichment programs.

Over the years, the multi-building facility has gone through various upgrades, including the last one in 2007, when several buildings were replaced. In 2013, the school began its largest construction project since opening in 1928, upgrading parts of the school that had not been touched for more than 50 years. The area of new construction will account for 50 percent of the school's total square footage once completed. With an emphasis on upgrading the campus, the decision was made to expand the effort to replace its outdated phone system with an advanced communications solution.

As part of upgrading the campus, The Carey School decided to install an advanced communications solution

CHALLENGES

A reliable communications system is critical to any organization, but the ability of a school to connect administrators, teachers and parents is particularly important, especially as it relates to the safety of the students. With a multi-phased construction project set to begin, The Carey School's Director of Technology, Cameron Moredock, was faced with many challenges.

The Carey School needed a phone system that performed well in temporary trailers and between the existing buildings across campus.

With a large portion of the school under construction, many students needed to be relocated to portable trailers, including those in the second and third grades as well as students in the foreign language and music classes. This created a significant communication issue since the existing phone system would not be available in the trailers. The Carey School needed a phone system that performed well in the trailers and between the existing buildings across campus. Moredock also wanted a feature-rich, future-proof system that could be used well beyond the completion of the construction project.

Before breaking ground, The Carey School was using an old proprietary system. Moredock referred to it as a legacy system with “unique programming components that were obtuse and not friendly.” Anytime there were “adds, moves or changes” to be made for staff members, or even with the simplest of changes, he had to call in an expensive outside vendor who was trained in that phone system. In fact, it was so expensive to have the third-party work done that the school waited for several phone changes to pile up before calling in the technician. That way the school could maximize the work being done during the site visit to help better manage costs. That delay in service also meant that critical changes just had to wait. This process of waiting and grouping phone changes could take weeks. In addition to being a hassle, it was simply inefficient.

Having suffered through the expense of maintaining an outdated system, Moredock and school administrators knew the complete cost of a new system would have to be a serious consideration in the evaluation process. The school needed a system that was not only more cost-friendly, but also easier to deploy and administer than its old system.

SOLUTION

After extensive research, it was determined that Digium's Switchvox business phone system would provide the best value.

Having deployed phone systems prior to working at The Carey School, Moredock knew a VoIP (Voice over IP) system would be a smart choice due to lower anticipated costs, yet robust features and deployment capabilities. He looked at the market and narrowed his choices to three. After extensive research, it was determined that Digium's Switchvox business phone system would provide the best value. In addition, Moredock had worked with Asterisk – the world's most widely used open source communications software – which is also the operating system powering Switchvox. He knew that by using Switchvox, the school would benefit from additional customization options. That's because through Digium's APIs, he could write new applications for the phone system or find relevant applications from the community of developers.

Without having a technical support team onsite, Moredock wanted to find a Digium-certified partner that could help with the implementation of the Switchvox system. He wanted one that was located close to the school in order to help with the entire project from planning to deployment of the new system. His research led him to TeleDynamic, a long-standing Digium partner located in the area. TeleDynamic had a strong track record working with companies to overhaul or replace existing phone systems and knew both Asterisk and the Switchvox phone system inside and out. For Moredock, it was a relief to know that if a problem or issue were to arise, someone from TeleDynamic could be onsite to review and resolve any issues – things that inevitably come up during projects of this size.

Classrooms and trailers were wired standard category 5 cabling and Ethernet switches. “It just worked!”

**Cameron Moredock
Director of Technology,
The Carey School**

The Carey School also chose Digium's IP phones, not only because they are feature rich and designed specifically for Switchvox, but because the API allows for limitless customization, such as the type of information or message that can be displayed on the phone. Phone quality was also a consideration and the Digium phones compared well against more costly, competing brands.

In preparation for the deployment, TeleDynamic handled technical programming and preconfigured the phones. Moredock and a local contractor wired the classrooms and the portable trailers with standard category 5 cabling and Ethernet switches. Phones were then connected and mounted on the walls and, as Moredock explains, “It just worked!”

RESULTS

Going into the deployment, Moredock said that the ideal indicator for success of their phone system upgrade project would be to roll out the new system and “hear nothing” from the administrators, teachers and other staff. And that is just what happened. The positive results were numerous and the features and benefits of the new system have already been enjoyed, including:

- For the first time, staff can receive email notifications when they have a new voicemail.
- Through custom scripts, the phones can be used as the school's bell system.
- Calls made remotely appear as though they are coming from the staff's school extension so personal phone numbers need not be given out.
- Teachers can now set “do not disturb” rules for their classroom.
- Presence, or awareness, is now viewable from the main switchboard.
- All phones operate similarly so there is no learning curve.

Changes to the phone system – such as adding new users and moving phones from one location to another – now take minutes, versus days or weeks. Plus, the changes can be handled in-house without having the high maintenance costs of paying a vendor to do the work.

COST SAVINGS

The Carey School has been able to reduce its costs significantly with Switchvox perpetual licensing. Other vendors had licenses that expired every year or once every three years, which would have been an ongoing expenditure for The Carey School.

With Switchvox, The Carey School now knows its fixed telco costs for the year, rather than unpredictable month-to-month costs with its old system. This has helped the school with budgeting.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The last stage of the project will come in September 2014, when the buildings are complete and students return to their new classrooms from the portable trailers. Moredock has full confidence in the next phase, stating, "I know all the components work. It should be real snap."

He has plans to integrate the entire student database with the phones; and he also wants to investigate other ways to take advantage of the great APIs that exist for Switchvox and Digium IP phones.



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