



# Highline Schools Learns to Reduce Telecom Costs with the Avaya IP Office Solution

Highline School district, just south of Seattle, Washington, needed a highly reliable, easy-to-manage telephone system that made it easy for parents to reach administrators and allow district support personnel to work more efficiently. When standardizing communication systems in the district administration building, Highline Schools chose the Avaya IP Office solution to meet its needs.

**Industry:**

Education

**Business Challenge:**

Standardizing the district administrative building on a single telecommunications system that would be easy to use and manage.

**Solution:**

Avaya™ IP412, FindMe/FollowMe, eBLF

**About Highline School District**

Highline School District serves the communities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, SeaTac and White Center, educating approximately 17,000 students in 31 schools. It also operates one administration building, a performing arts center and approximately 12 additional support/plant maintenance/student services facilities.

**Highline's Challenge**

At the district's administrative building, different departments were working from different phone systems, and in some instances, people sitting in offices next to one another were calling on different systems. Calls to one another had to be made on outside lines, imposing significant costs for inter-office phone calls. The incompatibility of the systems coupled with the out-of-date technology made system management a considerable challenge.

"Doing relocations on the old system was a nightmare," explained district telecommunications manager Dave Collins. "It typically required new or additional wiring and several days worth of reconfiguration. A single relocation project used to take about a week, with considerable costs."

Beyond management issues, none of Highline Administrations' former telecommunication systems offered the functionality of modern solutions. The lack of integrated voicemail was among the biggest problems.

"With our former system, you had to use an outside line to dial into the voicemail system; it was separate from the telephone systems. It was also difficult to navigate – callers and users alike could easily become lost in the maze of prompts. In addition, there weren't any lights on the phone or beeps before the dial tone to indicate that users had a new message," Collins said. "Since it was so difficult to use – and staff never knew for certain if they had a message – most people wouldn't check their voice mail for weeks at a time."

In addition to limitations of the voicemail system, the former system didn't offer any type of conferencing capability, which is used frequently in the district. Therefore, an outside conferencing vendor was being used, at a high monthly cost. A system offering integrated conferencing capabilities was sought to help the district reduce costs.

The district is within the Pacific Northwest's earthquake zone, and many remember the Nisqually earthquake in 2001 that rocked the area, reaching a 6.8 on the Richter scale. Collins was concerned about his ability to keep the system up and running





during an emergency or natural disaster, as he was unable to keep it operating during past earthquakes. Such inoperability was frightening for parents whose children are in a district building, and life-threatening if staff members were working, during an emergency.

School administrators recognized the former system's limitations and the expense of maintaining it, and approved the purchase of a new system. Collins now faced the myriad of choices available in telephone systems, and began his selection process.

### **Avaya Offers Ease of Purchase and Meets Highline's Needs**

Collins contacted a Seattle-area Avaya BusinessPartner, as well as several other vendors, to research his options. His requirements fell into two simple categories: IP capability and integrated easy-to-use voicemail.

future growth potential, tight integration between telephones and voicemail was essential. These two requirements were key in my selection process."

While others offered many of the features Highline wanted in a new system, the Avaya IP Office system met every need the district had – cost-effectively. In addition, Avaya made it easy for Highline to make a purchase decision by offering a Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC) contract, which allowed Highline school district to choose and purchase the solution without the time-consuming process of sending the job out to bid.

"Avaya really worked to ensure that the WSIPC contract was put in place so that I wasn't obligated to put the project out for a bid," Collins said. "Without the WSIPC contract that Avaya offered us, the phone system purchased would have been pushed into another funding year where the funds might not be available."

Though he was not obligated to request bids for the job, Collins did his homework, researching systems from six competing vendors.

### **The Avaya IP Office: a Winning Solution**

Avaya met Highline School District's system requirements with the IP Office solution, which offered Highline a feature-rich platform that met the district's needs and offered significant growth opportunities for the future.

After conducting his own research about six different systems, Collins knew that the IP Office system had the growth capability he desired in a system, as it can be upgraded simply by adding modules to the existing unit. This type of expansion was also scalable and would allow the system to grow incrementally along with the district. The transition to VoIP was equally easy, and could be implemented quickly and seamlessly at any time Collins feels the district is ready for such a move.

While others offered many of the features Highline wanted in a new system, the Avaya IP Office system met every need the district had – cost-effectively.

"I wanted a reliable system that would grow with the district, especially in being able to offer voice over-IP, or VoIP, without a card slot upgrade. Others offered IP readiness, but only as an add-on, which presented extra cost and implementation time. With the IP Office, it's immediate and easy – I can migrate to VoIP anytime I feel we're ready to do so," Collins explained. "In addition to



I wanted a reliable system that would grow with the district, especially in being able to offer voice over-IP, or VoIP, without a card slot upgrade. Others offered IP readiness, but only as an add-on, which presented extra cost and implementation time. With the IP Office, it's immediate and easy – I can migrate to VoIP anytime I feel we're ready to do so.

*Dave Collins, Highline School District, District Telecommunications Manager*

Collins was also pleased with the close integration between the voicemail and telephone system, as well as the capability to integrate MS Exchange messaging with the IP Office system. Now, employees can see clearly whether or not they have a voicemail message awaiting them, based on the indicator light on their phones. Voicemail Pro is also easy to navigate by using quick, easy-to-follow prompts. The feature allows employees to be much more responsive to callers than they were in the past, improving the district's communications with parents and vendors.

During the sales process, Collins also took six district secretaries and an administrator to a demonstration of the IP Office system, where they were all allowed to sit down and actually use the phones and see how the system worked. Everyone agreed that the system was the easiest to use, and the phones were the "friendliest." And Collins noted that DEFINITY® phones could be used on the IP Office system.

"When I saw the DEFINITY phones plugged into the IP Office, I was immediately at ease," Collins said. "That told me that the system was based on and could work well with the Avaya DEFINITY system, which, to me, is an industry standard in telephone systems. So I'd be purchasing a system with a solid foundation to rest on, that also had a clear migration path for the future, without any additional cost to my organization."

The choice was clear: the Avaya IP Office solution best met Highline School District's needs and offered outstanding investment protection.

### **IP Connectivity, Conferencing and eBLF Save Money, Improve Responsiveness and Productivity**

Upon implementation of the system, Collins and other users discovered other system features that would drive down costs and improve employees' responsiveness to parents and other vendors.

Collins cited the "Find Me/Follow Me" feature as one widely used by administration staff members, including himself. The feature allows individual users to program their phone to forward calls to a number where they will be more readily available, even to a mobile phone. The feature allows users the freedom to move about the building to accomplish key tasks, without missing calls from parents, colleagues or vendors.

The IP Office solution's integrated conferencing capability also provides considerable benefits to the district. When using the old 1A2 system, an outside conference vendor added costs to the district budget. But with the IP Office system, staff can set up and conduct conference call on demand, without reservations, for up to two parties of 64 callers each. The integrated conferencing feature is also quite flexible allowing meeting hosts to add ports to the call instantly, while the call is in progress, at no extra charge. The flexibility and cost savings resulting from the conferencing capability of the Avaya IP Office system was a major selling point for Highline School District.

Highline's main district secretary was partial to the system's electronic busy light field – or eBLF – feature on the reception console that allows her to see every user on the system and the status of that person's telephone line at any given time. Previously, she had to memorize several tonal commands associated with a Centrex console. Using such a system, there was no way to enlist help of other secretaries when the switchboard was busy, and when the phones were slow, the secretary still had to stay "on duty," as only she knew the commands to manage the system. Multitasking was nearly impossible.

"Both of our main receptionists/secretaries fell in love with the eBLF immediately," Collins explained. "The main receptionists can now route calls simply by touching a computer screen."

Collins also wanted to create pools of available secretaries to handle the phones during times of unusually high traffic,

“When I saw the DEFINITY phones plugged into the IP Office, I was immediately at ease,” Collins said. That told me that the system was based on and could work well with the Avaya DEFINITY system, which, to me, is an industry standard in telephone systems.”

*Dave Collins, Highline School District, District Telecommunications Manager*

such as during an earthquake or other emergency. With the old Centrex system, phone bank would have been necessary to create such a setup – resulting in the need to purchase additional, expensive equipment for an obsolete system. But with the eBLF feature on the Avaya IP Office, Collins can create reception "pools" that secretaries can dial in to as needed; they can be put in the same call group without even leaving their desks. As a result of this upgraded reception technology, the two receptionists/secretaries have been assigned additional duties because they are not spending the bulk of their time routing calls.

The most significant feature was the simple interoperability between all departments in the building as a result of being on the same telephone system. Inter-office calls are now made via the intercom system, rather than by using an outside line to contact an individual in an office down the hall.

According to Collins' research, 50 percent of calls on the former systems were inter-office calls. Collins estimates that the savings realized by completing these calls internally rather than externally will amortize the cost of the system

over the next year. Additionally, the system has allowed Highline to increase its number of DID extensions three-fold, while reducing the cost of local calls.

"The IP Office has greatly improved the communication between our staff and parents and vendors," says Collins.

Collins expects both the system, and his relationship with Avaya, to last a long time.

### Learn More

To find out how Avaya IP Office can enhance your communications solutions, please contact your Avaya Authorized BusinessPartner or Avaya Client Executive, or visit [www.avaya.com/smallmidbusiness](http://www.avaya.com/smallmidbusiness).

For more about Avaya and our other award-winning solutions, visit [www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

#### About Avaya

Avaya enables businesses to achieve superior results by designing, building and managing their communications networks. More than one million businesses worldwide, including 90 percent of the FORTUNE 500®, rely on Avaya solutions and services to enhance value, improve productivity and gain competitive advantage.

Focused on enterprises large to small, Avaya is a world leader in secure and reliable IP telephony systems, communications software applications and full life-cycle services. Driving the convergence of voice and data communications with business applications – and distinguished by comprehensive worldwide services – Avaya helps customers leverage existing and new networks to unlock value and enhance business performance.



IP Telephony

Contact Centers

Unified Communication

Services

© 2003 Avaya Inc.

All Rights Reserved. Avaya and the Avaya Logo are trademarks of Avaya Inc. and may be registered in certain jurisdictions. All trademarks identified by the ®, SM or TM are registered trademarks, service marks or trademarks, respectively, of Avaya Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Printed in the U.S.A.

06/03 • EF-BP2138