



Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society Creates an Efficient, Agile Communications Infrastructure based on Avaya IP Office Solution

Challenge:

To create an efficient, agile communications infrastructure within the Organisation and its trading groups.

Solution:

- Avaya IP Office Release 2.1
- Avaya IP412 (to support up to 360 users)
- Avaya IP403 and IP406 (to support 65 users)
- Avaya IP403 (to support 24 users)
- Avaya PC-based Phone Management Application
- Avaya Voicemail Messaging

Results:

Provided the Society with a scalable, efficient and flexible IP-enabled communications environment, geared to ease of management and ease of use.

The Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society is different from any other retailer. Its purpose, as a successful co-operative business, is to enhance the lives of its staff, members, customers and the communities it serves and to work towards a better fairer world. The Society has deployed an Avaya IP Office solution across several sites in the area — spanning food retail, automotive, funeral, travel, property and childcare services, to optimise the efficiency of its operations. As a result, the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society is benefiting from a scalable, easy to use, reliable and efficient IP-enabled voice network. And more than 112,000 highly satisfied members and staff.

The Organisation

The UK-based Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society is a large consumer co-operative society owned and controlled by its members — ordinary customers living locally, not big city investors. The Society is the largest regional independent retailer in this area with an annual turnover in excess of \$600 million, 108,000 active members and over 4,600 employees.

The Society covers a geographical area that spans five counties, including most of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire and the area around Swindon in Wiltshire. The Society is made up of six trading groups. The primary group is the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-op food retail group, which was the winner of the European 'Retail Solution of the Year' and 'EPoS initiative of the Year' in 2003. The automotive group comprises Mazda, Mitsubishi, Volkswagen and Volvo dealerships. There is also extensive coverage in funeral, travel, property and childcare services.

A retail co-operative is different from any other retailer. Why? Because it is owned by its members, who control it and benefit from it. Like all co-operatives, Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-op is founded on the co-operative values and principles of the International Co-operative Alliance. These ensure the Society conducts its business in an ethical and responsible manner. The Society's purpose is "as a successful co-operative business to enhance the lives of its staff, members, customers and the communities it serves and to work towards a better fairer world". The Society returns part of its profits to members as dividend and reinvests part of its profits in the communities it serves. In 2003, the Society was named in the top ten of the most generous UK businesses, giving more than 8% of its profits back to communities.





Efficient and Productive Communications

The long-term prosperity of the community of businesses within the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society relies on continuous, efficient communication. Each and every one of the businesses — from the food stores and automotive dealerships to the chilled food distribution centre and childcare centres — must be able to communicate with the Society's Oxford-based headquarters as efficiently and as productively as possible. Until three years ago though, the headquarters was relying on a 10-year old, outmoded Alcatel communications system. According to Ian Grain, Project Manager, Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society, this was undermining the seamless quality of communication and was in urgent need of replacement.

"Our Society has been a great success in recent years, with new lines of business continually being developed," he explains. "The problem was that the Alcatel system was becoming increasingly unreliable, difficult to program and expensive to maintain. If we wanted to make a change to the system, such as moving a person or adding an extension, we had to pay a maintenance provider to come and do it for us — a significant overhead. As we acquired more trading locations — and consequently increased support staff at the central office — we were also running out of capacity. In order to sustain that success and continue to

benefit our members, we needed to implement a flexible, proven and scalable communication system."

At the time, the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society was relying on the Avaya BusinessPartner iQual for network services and Novell support. "iQual introduced us to the Avaya world," Grain continues. "It was apparent that the next-generation of communications was converged voice and data technology, and we wanted to be part of it. We believed that an IP-led solution would bring scalability, ease of use, and reliability to our voice network. The unrivalled blend of Avaya and iQual vision, insight and focus was ideal for the Co-operative. Avaya has years of experience in helping companies all over the world overcome the most difficult communications challenges. Add in iQual's local deployment experience and you have a compelling partnership."

Comprehensive IP Office Deployment

Avaya IP Office was initially deployed across two sites in the same geographic location — the Society's central administrative site and the Motorworld multi-brand automotive dealership located nearby. An Avaya IP412 system, which supports up to 360 extensions, was implemented to support 250 analogue phone users at the Oxford headquarters and Avaya IP403 and IP406 systems were installed to support 65 staff at the automotive dealers. Subsequently, Avaya IP403 was integrated into the Co-operative's chilled distribution centre for use by 12 staff with digital phones. Twelve further agents at the call centre dedicated to the Internet shopping service are using Avaya IP403 and Call Centre software, together with several other satellite and remote offices. The Society currently has a combination of DSL, ISDN and leased lines to link sites.





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Ian Grain, Project Manager, Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society

The Avaya IP Office solution provides the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative with a comprehensive communications architecture spanning software, infrastructure and services. The result is an agile, efficient environment through which the Co-operative can execute its business. "Sites were previously linked by a traditional telephone system," says Grain. "By connecting sites using voice over IP, the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative is reducing its costs and boosting productivity — which is excellent news for our staff and members."

If that wasn't enough, the system was recently enhanced through an upgrade to the latest version of Avaya IP Office — Release 2.1. This provides a host of new features and functions, including PIN-based enhanced call control, support for IP Virtual Private Networking (VPN) and improved call reporting. It spearheads faster, more cost-effective deployment, using the remote software upgrade capability, a maintenance and modification wizard and support for labelling phones. The latest release also improves the Co-operative's quality of service: full merge on telephone settings and uninterrupted service during modification are all geared to ensuring that communication within the Society is efficient, effective — and continuous.

Accelerated Implementation and Reduced Complexity

According to Grain, one of the greatest breakthroughs of Avaya IP Office Release 2.1 is the reduced installation time and complexity. "When we previously deployed Avaya IP Office, we literally drove from site to site installing the system. When you consider that the Society is dispersed across five counties of England, it's easy to understand that this approach was expensive, inefficient and a waste of effort," he says. "With the latest version, we can manage this remotely using the pre-packaged Installation and Administration Wizard. This reduces the time spent installing an IP Office system and removes configuration errors.

We can utilise the error checking capability to review existing configurations that may contain errors and iron out issues, even where the configuration was not created using the wizard. The wizard can also be used to design user templates, complete with phone button programming that can be subsequently applied across a range of extensions."

"Features of the IP Office that are ideally suited to a company of this size and topology include the availability of various sizes of the platform to suit individual sites from small, four extension sites, right up to 360," he continues. "Other features that we like include the expansion capabilities, the ability to route calls to company mobiles through Nokia Premicell devices connected as analogue trunks, the routing capabilities which we have utilised over a variety of connection types and the integration capabilities which mean we can maintain and run a consistent managed internal telephony system across several locations from our network operation centre," he continues. "Another advantage is the on-screen user advice. When a user moves their mouse over the screen, they have detailed, information tips on how they can use their Phone Manager Pro or Voicemail Pro."

IP Office 2.1 now makes it easier and quicker for users to log into the telephone system. A new PIN-based restriction can now be invoked via a short code that brings additional flexibility to the user experience. When a user dials a number that matches the short code, they will be prompted to enter the account code. Upon entering a valid account code, the call will be placed. "This enhanced manageability is transforming our day-to-day activities," he says. "We can now execute a multitude of administrative functions quickly and easily from the one console." The Society has set up an IS help desk to manage all IS related calls, including the telephone systems. The help desk team are on call seven days a week, during trading hours, and can now switch the help desk to a night service and divert all enquiries from the help desk directly to their mobiles.



We're really satisfied with this Avaya system: it's performed beyond all our expectations. We are continually striving to provide a rewarding service experience to everyone — whether its staff, members or customers — and thanks to Avaya we can provide a consistent, high quality communications service.



Ian Grain, Project Manager, Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society

"We're really satisfied with this Avaya system: it's performed beyond all our expectations," Grain concludes. "We are continually striving to provide a rewarding service experience to everyone — whether its staff, members or customers — and thanks to Avaya we can provide a consistent, high quality communications service. Best of all, it helps the Society to drive efficiencies which can be passed back directly to our members."

About the BusinessPartner

Formed in 1991, iQual is recognised as specialists in the voice and data network arena. From the design of local area and wide area networks, and the convergence of voice & data, iQual brings almost a unique level of skill and care in providing professional cost effective solutions for both large and small organisations. For more information, visit www.iqual.co.uk

About the Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society

The UK-based Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society is a large co-operative society owned and controlled locally, offering food retail, automotive, funeral, travel, property and childcare services and benefits to its members. The Society is the largest regional independent retailer in this area with an annual turnover over \$600 million, 108,000 active members and over 4,600 employees. Like all co-operatives, it supports the co-operative values and principles of the International Co-operative Alliance. These ensure the Society conducts its business in an ethical and responsible manner. The Society's purpose is "as a successful co-operative business to enhance the lives of its staff, members, customers and the communities it serves and to work towards a better fairer world". The Society returns part of its profits to members as dividend and reinvests part of its profits in the communities it serves. In 2003, the Society was named in the top ten of the most generous UK businesses, giving more than 8% of its profits back to communities. For more information, visit www.osg.coop

About Avaya

Avaya enables businesses to achieve superior results by designing, building and managing their communications networks. Over one million businesses worldwide, including more than 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

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