Global architecture firm implements a ShoreTel UC solution across five continents for greater TCO

Seeking global unity

Gensler is headquartered in San Francisco, California, with 38 offices and 3,000 professionals across five continents. The firm needed to architect and unify communications throughout its growing organization.

Flexibility in a VoIP system

While Gensler’s business was booming, the firm was expanding into new geographies, new offices, and was making many phone changes and moves. Gensler was facing major system upgrade costs simply to expand to handle additional users. Then, when the global economic downturn forced Gensler to trim its workforce, Bruce Bartolf, principal and chief technology officer at Gensler, was left with many extra phones and a need for extensively flexible telephony.

“We needed to move toward a voice over IP (VoIP) platform that would be reliable, easy to manage, and allow for efficient communication, regardless of where and how we grow. A new solution would also need to integrate with Nortel at least for the remainder of that system’s life cycle, and we were very interested in superior voice quality, too,” says Bartolf.

He also wanted to ensure that his new VoIP solution would adhere to best practices such as simplicity while scaling up or down, and communications survivability regardless of network

ShoreTel Solution:
ShoreTel integrated with existing Nortel systems, and eventually became the primary VoIP provider for all Gensler locations. The solution included 3,400 ShoreTel IP Phones across 38 sites worldwide and ShoreTel Communicator.

ShoreTel Benefits:
- 80 percent reduction in IT management time
- Easily scalable and highly available
- Single-image phone system
- 70 percent reduction in maintenance costs
availability. Gensler initially selected another VoIP vendor to integrate and transition with the Nortel system, but there were many complexities involved in the deployment, creating delays that interrupted business operations.

In looking for an alternative, Bartolf created a “bake-off” between ShoreTel and two other vendors. “PacketFusion was able to install ShoreTel and run a complete UC solution, including integration into the existing Nortel in less than two hours. The other vendors took seven to ten days just to set up their test systems,” he continues.

**ShoreTel designs a modern VoIP system**

Gensler selected a ShoreTel UC solution to deploy across its organization, based on ShoreTel IP Phones, ShoreTel Communicator, and ShoreTel Voice Switches. The initial focus was integration with the existing Nortel gear at offices struggling with growth and integration with Avaya systems already in place. ShoreTel was first installed in the New York and Chicago offices, where systems were integrated.

“Since then, we methodically deployed ShoreTel across the U.S. and across the globe until it completely replaced our Nortel and Avaya deployment. The great story here is that we gained a phenomenally easy-to-manage, feature-rich VoIP system that is less expensive to operate and scale, which really helps during economic downturns—and upturns as well,” says Bartolf.

The ShoreTel UC Solution today comprises more than 3,400 IP Phones, and the entire worldwide system is standardized on three voice switches. ShoreTel Communicator adds universal simplicity for sharing information and streamlining workflows, from Gensler desktops, mobile devices, and any phone connected to the network.

As part of this advanced UC implementation, ShoreTel is providing unified messaging and fostering real-time collaboration. The ShoreTel UC system is fully integrated with voicemail, email, and calendars, including Microsoft Outlook—all through a single interface.

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Bruce Bartolf, Principal and CTO

**Gensler**

**Advanced architecture and simple, clean lines**

ShoreTel’s innovative communications platform facilitates extensive simplification, enabling Bartolf to trim the time and resources. “We used to have four staffers to handle phone-related tasks. Now with ShoreTel, we have less than a full-time dedicated position, a total of two full-time employees working part-time to manage the entire system, and we’re still able to do all our own installs and all the moves/adds/changes for each office,” says Bartolf.

ShoreTel’s fully distributed architecture allows Gensler to easily scale up or down to accommodate business needs while providing automatic failover and redundancy for greater availability of phone systems. “The fact that our ShoreTel platform is not tied into the network like other call manager servers is critical to a better survivability rate. With ShoreTel, we can distribute among regions, we can control the setup, and we have the failover, the simplicity, and the functionality. Not too long ago, we reallocated...
underutilized ShoreTel equipment to replace a legacy NEC PBX in Los Angeles,” he adds. “We wound up replacing the NEC with ShoreTel for less than the cost of maintaining it for a year.”

Another ShoreTel feature Bartolf mentions is least-cost routing, the process of selecting the path of outbound communications traffic based on cost. ShoreTel uses automated, policy-based network selection and least-cost routing to help reduce costly cellular charges for global enterprises with multiple points-of-presence, such as Gensler. Calls are instead routed through VoIP and Wi-Fi to the closest access number, for an order-of-magnitude savings.

Building an enduring foundation for savings

Gensler is one of the more sophisticated ShoreTel implementations, yet simplicity and savings continue as the firm morphs and grows. “We are looking forward to some of the advanced things that ShoreTel is planning, such as ubiquity of integrations and mobile technologies. Whether people are on SIP, cell phones, Skype, or home analog lines—ShoreTel facilitates the ability to control it all through one system, one intuitive platform,” Bartolf says.

Bartolf credits the ShoreTel implementation with helping Gensler to eliminate 70 percent of its maintenance costs and saving headcount expenses. Gensler has just celebrated its final PBX replacement in Shanghai, China for a complete ShoreTel implementation.

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“ShoreTel is focused on end user interface and operational simplicity. The solution is less expensive to manage, easy to install, and simple to use. It’s about total cost of ownership. I’m a fan of getting technology that works. That, quite simply, is ShoreTel,” he concludes.

ShoreTel. Brilliantly simple business communications.

ShoreTel, Inc. (NASDAQ: SHOR) is a leading provider of brilliantly simple IP phone systems and unified communications solutions powering today’s always-on workforce. Its flexible communications solutions for on-premises, cloud and hybrid environments eliminate complexity, reduce costs and improve productivity.