

## ALLIED WORK FORCE EMPLOYS AVAYA VOIP



ALLIED WORK FORCE, A LABOUR HIRE COMPANY WHICH PROVIDES TEMPORARY AND CASUAL STAFF TO BLUE-COLLAR INDUSTRIES, HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A VOIP ROLLOUT OF ITS 17 SITES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ACCORDING TO JASSEN ELLIOTT, IT MANAGER AT ALLIED, THE ROLL OUT HAS BEEN RELATIVELY SEAMLESS.

### THE CUSTOMER

Allied Work Force was established to provide New Zealand businesses with quick access to labour and has offices in Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Nelson, Napier and Christchurch amongst others. With a staff pool of over 10,000, it prides itself on providing 'muscle when you need it' and has a computerised system that allows it to supply almost 2500 personnel daily. Based on IRD returns, Allied Work Force is the 4th largest employer in New Zealand.

### THE CHALLENGES

With over 10,000 potential callers using Allied Work Force (Allied) and 19 disparate sites across New Zealand, management at Allied recognised the need to upgrade its current telephony system to incorporate VoIP. The company

has an expansive distribution operation and a large number of dealings interbranch so the cost of trunk calls was high and the potential toll savings using VoIP significant.

Jassen Elliott, new to the job in 2003, was assigned the task of implementing the technology across the company.

"There had been a lot of talk in the industry about the shortcomings of VoIP – we needed to make sure the system we implemented would not fail and that we could iron out any problems that may potentially occur. There was already a pilot site running so we continued the 'testing and fault finding' stage.

"In addition, we had to ensure the transition to VoIP was seamless. Not only did we have new systems to install, but we had ISDN lines converting to analogue lines and upgrades to our private office network (PON) all taking place simultaneously. Down time to our people on site is a big cost so getting the equipment implemented and installed as simply and as quickly as possible was the biggest challenge," he said.


Allied Work Force began the roll out into each branch at the beginning of 2004.

### THE SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The company began working with Avaya four years ago when it implemented the Avaya Argent Office product and now has a number of different Avaya systems through out the organisation. Head Office uses an Avaya IP Office 403 server.

Each of the 19 branches use Avaya Small Office 2 servers. The cost effective Avaya Small Office servers gives Allied access for local calls and the added security of still being able to make calls via the local PSTN should their LAN link temporarily fail.

According to Mr Elliott, the latest implementation using VoIP trunking was the only solution that could economically provide the answers. On top of that, Allied Work Force already had a strong relationship with Comtel for escalated issues



who had offered extensive support during the original IP Office rollout.

In their solution, Allied Work Force has included:

- VoIP telephony
- Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) applications
- Voice Mail Pro – centralised voicemail – multiple attendance features
- Converged voice and data networking across multiple sites
- ID Call forwarding, conference calling, voice messaging
- Advanced call routing
- End user administration of phone system

The CTI interface gives full user visibility to staff across all sites so at any given time, they can check the status of each extension and, when they want to call, they simply click on the call icon.

According to Jassen Elliott, the phased installation went 'remarkably well'. The implementing team installed one system per week every Friday for 16 weeks. "It was a matter of flying to Nelson or Taranaki for the morning, installing the system, testing it, carrying out training for staff and flying back in the afternoon."

He says Telecom NZ ensured the cut-overs on the PON and telephone lines were either implemented on the day or in the week leading up to the cut-over.

"We didn't have many problems on voice quality because we worked with the telecom network designers and firewall technical support teams to ensure we would not have any latency or any break ups. We had staff from Avaya, Agile and NSP on hand during the testing phase, all who had recommended a compression level to avoid break-ups.

Some of the initial problems included the effects of having large packets of data coming across the network. "We were getting croaky voices and echoes (the result of loops in the local networks on the pilot sites)," Mr Elliott said.

Peter Naylor, wireline development manager for Comtel who

helped set up the sites in Christchurch and Palmerston North said, "We were only getting speech one way intermittently and the problem was traced to the firewall. A configuration change to the H323 protocol on the Linux firewall resolved the problem."

## THE BENEFITS

Mr Elliott says the company is delighted with the easy transition to VOIP. "Staff are happy, we have had no training issues because the product is so easy to use and we are seeing extensive cost savings on our lines. On top of that, the productivity enhancements are also notable."

Mr Elliott issues strong advice to enterprises looking to go down the VoIP route – do the research first and run a test site to ensure it is what you want. "The base work is very very important. If you get that in place first, the rest will follow and you will soon see the return on investment."

Mr Naylor from Comtel says that Allied Work Force is now well positioned to roll out future technology upgrades.

Allied Work Force will retain its 0800 LABOUR landline number but is modifying the way it operates. The next phase of the project is interfacing the Avaya equipment with their in-house database and identifying incoming caller numbers. The system will query the database and if recognised, the call will automatically divert to the appropriate branch over VoIP. A pop-up system on the PCs would allow the end user to identify the caller, as well as confirm their details and make any modifications while taking their call.

For more information on how an Avaya solution can help your business, please visit our website at [www.agile.co.nz](http://www.agile.co.nz)

  
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