



Trucking Company Leaves Traditional Phone System in the Dust



» CASE STUDY

ABOUT ADMIRAL MERCHANTS

They say that good things come to those who wait, and this is as true for companies as it is for people. Admiral Merchants, a transportation company, recently discovered the truth of this old adage when it came to their phone system.

With over 80 years of experience facilitating truckers with financing, insurance, centralized customer support, and other services, the 53-person company based in Minneapolis, MN relies heavily on their telephone system for everything from first line communications with customers, to conference calls, and communicating with agents and truckers on the road. So when the time came to replace their aging Avaya system in 2009, they looked at both in-house and hosted solutions, eventually deciding to go with a hosted solution.

HOSTED TELEPHONY – SIMPLICITY REFINED

Tim Neid, IT Director with Admiral, noted that they planned to migrate to a hosted solution because of the numerous benefits, both operationally and financially.

For example, since a hosted phone system is Internet-based, the only equipment they need to have on site is the actual phones. Everything else – both hardware and software – resides in a commercial-grade data center. This means Admiral is spared all sorts of tasks, from regular administration, backups and disaster recovery planning to equipment upgrades. And the level of redundancy a data center can offer, from power and cooling to failover servers, is something that would be prohibitive for most companies to implement themselves. “Since our phone system is so



ORGANIZATION: Transportation company

LOCATION: Minneapolis, MN

CHALLENGE: To improve the reliability, functionality and flexibility of their telephony system while lowering costs.

INTEGRA SOLUTION: Integra Hosted PBX Service

REASONS:

- Intrinsic reliability and disaster recovery at no additional cost
- Consolidated solution with zero administration
- Conferencing
- Enhanced customer support
- Future-proofed against rapid pace of innovation

“Our goal was to switch over with no impact on our customers, and Integra delivered that.”

Tim Neid, Admiral Merchants, IT Director

critical for our business continuity, we found the greater reliability of a hosted system a compelling option,” said Neid.

By choosing a hosted service, Admiral would no longer need to be concerned with unexpected expenses when something inevitably goes wrong. Simply by paying one monthly bill that covers all eventualities, they could simplify payables and improve the predictability of their cash flow too.

Admiral also liked that a hosted service is a non-capital expense with the safety net of a built in upgrade path. They avoid up-front capital outlays, long depreciation periods, and monthly financing. With a hosted solution they also avoid the risk of buyer’s remorse as rapidly changing voice technology makes the future hard to predict. “Communications technology is changing so quickly”, related Neid. “We were very concerned that by the time we owned a system in a few years, it would be obsolete.” Since software and hardware upgrades are an intrinsic feature of a hosted service, they knew that they would always be current.

“Integra Hosted PBX lets us monitor our call center closely, looking for opportunities to do things better. We like the control it gives us.”

Tim Neid, *Admiral Merchants, IT Director*

A SHORT DETOUR

With these advantages in mind, they originally settled on a service from TDS Telecom. While the simplicity of a hosted service was attractive, the experience with TDS left a lot to be desired. From dropped calls and poor audio quality, to system upgrades that broke critical features, they found themselves back on the market within 18 months, looking for a new provider. They approached Integra Telecom of Portland, OR about their new PBX Hosted Service. Based on technology from Mitel Networks, the Integra service was instantly attractive. “Integra had shown us the Mitel IP5000 hardware solution during our first round of research,” recalled Neid. “If a hosted service with the same pedigree had been available then, we would have chosen it over TDS.”

The Integra Hosted PBX went live in May of 2011, and Admiral has not had to slow down again since. Call drops have stopped, and audio quality issues cleared up immediately.



THE STAR TREATMENT

Admiral knew they were back on the right track even before the solution went live. The level of customer support from Integra for the switch-over exceeded even their wildest expectations. Neid recounted that Integra had engineers on site for over two weeks programming and configuring the system to meet their needs exactly. “Our goal was to switch over with no impact on our customers, and Integra delivered that. Their support was one hundred percent better than TDS. They made us feel important.” Switching over on a Friday afternoon, Integra engineers worked with them to ensure that the new system came up flawlessly. By 8 PM, they were sure there would be no one surprised when work began on Monday morning.



INTEGRA UNDER THE HOOD

Any voice system is ultimately only as useful as the applications it supports. From mobility and collaboration tools for users to performance analysis for administrators, the right applications enable business while the wrong ones can cripple it. With Integra’s Hosted PBX, Admiral gained capacities for better employee workflow and the tools they need to effectively measure performance.

A case in point: as a company with literally thousands of customers and partners, Admiral makes a lot of conference calls. In fact, any time an accident occurs on the road, they need to connect a minimum of five parties, including driver, agent, claim adjuster with their own staff. With TDS, they could have a maximum of three participants on a call – a limitation that complicated everyday business communications. So they were relieved to find that the Integra Hosted PBX conferencing will easily support all their needs now, and in the future.

Time-based routing is another Integra Hosted PBX feature that allows Admiral to fine tune the way their phone system works. Since they have business hours of 8 to 5, but limited staff in the office from 7 to 7, they route all calls between 7 and 8 in the morning, and between 5 and 7 in the evening to a customized, limited distribution ACD. Between 8 and 5, calls are automatically distributed normally. This switching between ACDs is



ADMIRAL MERCHANTS

automatic and happens every day, helping to ensure that they the coverage they need to stay on top of trucking needs across multiple time zones.

Admiral has seven Teleworker phones which they are in the process of distributing to key members of their remote sales team. These phones will allow the sales people to communicate with coworkers – both in the office and at other remote locations – as though they were sitting at a desk in Minneapolis. They can extension dial and access voice mail and other productivity features regardless of their locations. As Neid points out, “Teleworker is the sort of seamless refinement that makes remote collaboration more effective. The phones get out of the way and let us work.”

Admiral also plans to make extensive use of Integra Hosted PBX historic reporting and real-time alerts to gain insight into issues as they occur, and to identify trends and patterns that can help them make better use of their contact center. As Neid explains, “Integra Hosted PBX lets us monitor our call center closely, looking for opportunities to do things better. We like the control it gives us.”

For Admiral Merchants, the road to a hosted voice solution had its bumps. But once they discovered Integra, the direction ahead became clear. They have a solution that can expand and evolve to meet the needs of their growing business and survive even the worse disasters. For Admiral, the road ahead is smooth.

ABOUT ADMIRAL MERCHANTS

Admiral Merchants is a professional transportation company delivering excellent service to their business partners and customers. Their transportation professionals achieve long-term financial success by providing their customers with the best total solution to their transportation needs. They accomplish this by ensuring that their work processes are efficient, enabling them to deliver excellent services. Through collaborating with their partners, they help them prosper, and in the process provide rewarding careers for their employees and deliver increased value for their shareholders.

ABOUT INTEGRA TELECOM

Integra Telecom Inc. connects business by providing enterprise-grade networking, communications and cloud solutions to thousands of business and carrier customers in 11 Western states, including: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The company owns and operates a nationally acclaimed, best-in-class fiber-optic network consisting of a 5,000-mile high-speed long-haul fiber network and a 3,000-mile metropolitan access network including more than 1,700 fiber-fed buildings. The company has earned some of the highest customer loyalty and customer satisfaction ratings in the telecommunications industry. Integra Telecom is a registered trademark of Integra Telecom Inc.

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