

College Migrates to IP Telephony in One Weekend, While Maintaining Current Investment

CUSTOMER NEEDS

- An IP communications phone system to support future growth
- Reduced phone system maintenance requirements
- Unified messaging for faculty, staff and students
- An upgraded data network

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

- Resilient Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platform (ICP)
- Existing redundant Mitel SX-2000
- Mitel IP Phones
- Mitel Enterprise Manager
- Mitel Messaging Server

RESULTS

- Seamlessly implemented hybrid TDM-IP telephony phone system over one weekend
- Centralized phone system maintenance for entire system
- Unified voice and email messaging for all users
- Reduced time spent by IT staff on phone system maintenance by more than half
- Implemented state-of-the-art ProCurve Networking by HP network throughout campus



Being a small campus with one location has advantages and disadvantages for an IT department. While a single location is easier to coordinate when major network upgrades occur, "When we want to do a big project, it affects the entire campus at once," said Terry Mongrain, network administrator at Northland College in Wisconsin.

But recently, Northland College had reached a crossroads. With a 15-year-old Mitel® PBX phone system in place and the possibility of future expansion ahead, it needed to plan its path forward. Mongrain's team decided to implement an IP telephony system to simplify management and enable future growth. The college also wanted to enhance the services offered to its students, and so sought a solution that included unified messaging.

After considering solutions from three vendors, Northland College opted for a hybrid Mitel solution. The new phone system brings the benefits of IP-based telephony – including unified messaging – to the campus, and it worked seamlessly into a complete data network upgrade, thanks to a close partnership between Mitel and ProCurve Networking by HP.



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– Terry Mongrain, network administrator, Northland College

Keeping the Old, In with the New

Northland College’s Mitel SX-2000 PBX phone system has served the college well. “It’s a great, rock-solid digital PBX,” said Mongrain. But phone systems have come a long way in 15 years, and the college was looking to the future. New features enabled by IP telephony, such as teleworking, unified messaging, and XML simply weren’t available on digital systems.

After evaluating a variety of pure-IP solutions, Northland College opted for a hybrid approach that would allow the campus to leverage IP telephony while keeping the legacy PBX in place so Northland College can easily manage the growth in IP at its own pace. “This worked out best for the college,” Mongrain confirmed, “because we didn’t have to forklift the old system.”

The college also required a network upgrade before it could implement any IP solution, and “Mitel’s collaboration with ProCurve allowed us to go with the better network of the options we were considering. Dollar for dollar, ProCurve products just made sense,” added Mongrain. In fact, “Since the network went in, we’ve had no downtime at all.”

Close Partners, Seamless Implementation

Mitel and its solution provider architected a solution whereby the existing SX-2000 handles most of the trunking and provides services to over 700 students. It is linked to two resilient Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platforms (ICPs) via MSDN, and the 3300 ICPs are connected via IP. All professors and staff have resilient IP phones connected to the 3300 ICPs.

The entire system is managed from a single, web-based graphical user interface: the Mitel Enterprise Manager. “For an IT department with only three staff,” said Mongrain, “this makes a world of difference. It has reduced the time we spend maintaining the phone system by more than half.” Now, if an employee moves locations, it is simply a matter of plugging the phone in at a new location. New student mailboxes are just easily set up and torn down through the web interface.

Through the Mitel Messaging Server, users retrieve both email and phone messages from a single mailbox, which is accessible from email or from any phone on the campus, including new IP phones in administrative areas as well as existing analog phones in residences. In rooms where two students share a residence, a single extension supports two mailboxes allowing the college to further reduce costs while maintaining secure and confidential mailboxes for each dorm resident. In addition, the Messaging Server allows the college administrative personnel to have their email messages read over the telephone using Text To Speech (TTS) and even respond to them via the telephone. System administrative capabilities provide the option to deploy TTS for all or only selected users on the system, allowing maximum flexibility for feature deployment matched to the user’s requirements.

ABOUT NORTHLAND COLLEGE

Type: Environmental Liberal Arts College

Location: Ashland, Wisconsin

Campus: 18 buildings on approximately
20 acres near Lake Superior

Faculty & staff: 195

Students: 750; 550 in residence

Website: www.northland.edu

“It’s often hard to get students to check their email, but unified messaging is solving that problem,” said Mongrain. “We communicate critical information to students via email, and they love that they can get voicemail and email messages together. It makes them check their email more frequently now.”

The implementation was seamless to users, and the changeover was complete in just one weekend. Already, Mongrain is exploring other advanced applications that IP telephony makes possible. For example, the Mitel Teleworker Solution may be used by teachers on sabbatical or by remote admissions counselors to connect directly into the college’s phone network while working from a remote location.

Customer Experience

→ Northland College

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Companies don't make decisions, people do. That is why Mitel is leading the way toward a new and more personalized approach to communications for enterprise and small business. Our innovative solutions, applications and desktop appliances enable you to access, process and control your communications and information naturally, simply and efficiently.

Our solutions allow you to collaborate over distance and time and to interact with your customers, colleagues and partners as never before. By combining the power of voice, data and video over converged high speed networks, Mitel provides you with flexible and personalized tools that let you leverage the latest advances for personal and organizational advantage.

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