



SOUTH KESTEVEN IMPROVES ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES WITH DAMOVO

eGovernment targets provided the incentive South Kesteven District Council in Lincolnshire needed to invest in a dedicated customer service centre and improve access to council services. At the time, it did not have one single communications network but relied on a mix of networks and vendors to provide support. This was proving burdensome to manage, not to mention costly.

So the Council initiated a tender for a new communications infrastructure. After evaluating the solutions available, the Council selected the Mitel 3300 IP communications platform delivered via an Extreme data network, both of which were sourced and delivered from Damovo. Mitel's solution convinced the Council of the benefits of an IP-based communications solution, while Damovo impressed South Kesteven District Council with its support package and technical expertise.

The rollout ran smoothly and South Kesteven District Council is now reaping the benefits of only having one communications network and one support contract to manage. In addition, it has installed call centre software from Mitel, which enables it to manage call volumes and agent staffing more effectively in the customer service centre. Next, the Council plans to explore the benefits of offering homeworking and remote working to some of its staff, supported by its new communications platform.

Shaping the future of South Kesteven

South Kesteven District Council serves 125,000 citizens in an area of 365 square miles in southwest Lincolnshire. The Council's main site is based at Grantham and houses 400 office based staff. It has a second office in Grantham where 40 people work, and another three sites at Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping, which each employ about ten people.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES - FINDING BETTER WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH RESIDENTS

The Council's vision is to shape the future together with their partners and residents to develop a place where people really matter – focussing on delivering outstanding services. To this end, it has several key priorities, two of which are improving access to council services and finding better ways to communicate and listen to residents.

Improving access to council services

These objectives tie in closely with the eGovernment targets set at the start of the millennium. Back then, South Kesteven did not even have a dedicated customer service centre that residents could contact to find out about various council services. But under the eGovernment banner, South Kesteven District Council initiated a project to bring its various services into a dedicated customer service centre, able to answer a range of queries from the public.

However, the Council lacked an Automatic Call Distributor (ACD) telephone system to manage incoming calls within the customer service centre. In addition, Centrex, the NTL telephone system that the Council used to handle external calls, lacked the depth of functionality the Council wanted to improve its communications as a whole. ***“It was quite a clunky system: we had very little data about where telephone calls were routed around the organisation and very little information on calls coming in,”*** says Andy Nix, Service Manager – Business Transformation and Information Management at South Kesteven District Council. ***“So we had no customer service functionality and a fairly old data network, with voice and data run as two separate networks.”***

What's more, maintaining this network architecture was costly. While the main site used NTL's Centrex system, each of the area offices operated as a separate entity with its own BT phone lines and contracts. The second site in Grantham used a combination of NTL Centrex and BT phone lines. ***“So we had a mixture of equipment, lots of bills coming in from different phones and, overall, management was pretty awkward too,”*** admits Nix. Consequently, South Kesteven District Council



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decided to initiate a tender process to update its entire communications infrastructure.

Mitel IP Solution from Damovo meets South Kesteven's needs

“The scope of our project included a completely new network, call centre software, network resilience and also, importantly, the ability to bring the area offices onto the same internal telephone exchange,” says Nix. A formal pitch was held with six vendors before the list was reduced further down to three. Shortly afterwards, the Council selected a communications solution from Damovo.

IN ADDITION TO MITEL TECHNOLOGY, DAMOVO OFFERED A FULL SUPPORT PACKAGE

Its decision was partly based on the technology solution presented by Damovo: the Mitel 3300 IP communications platform delivered via an Extreme data network. ***“The initial scope of our project involved teasing out what type of solution we were going to go for: IP, PBX or a hybrid of the two,”*** recalls Nix. ***“We decided to go for a 100% IP solution after we were shown the benefits and the flexibility it provided.”***

“At this stage, IP telephony was still relatively new but what we liked about Mitel was that the vendor had done a lot of work on IP telephony,” continues Nix. ***“Also the phone product features matched what we wanted, it was a cost-effective solution and it presented a good technology fit.”***

In addition to the technology from Mitel, Damovo offered a full support package covering the data network, phones and exchange system. For the Council’s services team, which was used to managing multiple support packages, having everything included under one contract was a big advantage in easing the management of its communications network.

“What we liked about the Damovo solution was the support package they offered, their technical understanding of the solution and their good project management,” adds Nix. ***“Damovo’s team was also clear in demonstrating the benefits of the solution compared to other vendors. They were certainly far more accommodating than other providers and offered to show us their support facilities, whereas in other cases we had to demand it. So not only were they more transparent, but when we saw their support operations we were satisfied that they were efficient and well-run.”***

The implementation team from South Kesteven District Council had a certain amount of flexibility in choosing how to put the Mitel solution together.

“We had a wide range of phones to choose from,” says Nix. ***“We picked a model at the lower end but could choose as many features as we wanted, such as customisable keys.”*** The Mitel solution also lets the IT team devolve more management to the end-users, so employees can



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make changes to their desk phones without requiring the intervention of the IT department, which they needed before with the previous system.

Damovo’s project management team worked closely with South Kesteven to ensure the rollout ran smoothly. 300 new IP phones were rolled out to people’s desktops gradually, while the changeover to the new system was carried out on a weekend.

“That was the painful part: lots of scrabbling under desks and chasing wires,” laughs Nix. ***“But in terms of the whole project, nothing desperately went wrong, which was good.”***

Damovo provided training support to the Council’s staff – ***“it was well done and we liked what was offered,”*** adds Nix – and South Kesteven was impressed with the overall level of support from Damovo. ***“We had a very good team from Damovo and I have nothing but praise for them,”*** he continues. ***“The project manager did a***

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM WORKED CLOSELY TO ENSURE THE ROLLOUT RAN SMOOTHLY

spectacularly good job; he bent over backwards to help us as much as he possibly could."

In addition to the Mitel 3300 solution, South Kesteven District Council implemented Mitel's call centre software. **"Probably now we value that solution as much as the whole system,"** says Nix. **"It is very good call centre software and probably the feature we've maximised the most."**

For instance, the Council now has real-time monitoring of call queues. Callers wanting to contact the Council dial a number specific to the department they want to reach and are put in a queue within the customer service centre until an agent becomes available. **"People log in to manage different queues and we monitor in real time the length of time residents have to wait and can shift resources accordingly,"** says Nix.

Mitel's call centre software has been integrated with the Council's CRM system so that callers can speak to an agent who has department-specific knowledge and who can update the back-office system with new caller information if necessary. **"Increasingly, we'll make agents generalists as we're aiming for a situation where anyone can answer any calls,"** says Nix. However, there are no plans to move to a single number for all council services, but the few remaining departments not yet in the customer service centre will be transferred across over the next year.

Damovo simplifies network management at South Kesteven

Communications at South Kesteven District Council have been revamped following the implementation of the Mitel and Extreme solution from Damovo. **"We like the flexibility of being able to manage the phones remotely and move people around without a hitch (basically they can just plug their phone in elsewhere),"** says Nix. **"What's more, we now have increased stability and speed in the network architecture, whereas before we had periods of downtime."** With Mitel's call centre software installed, the Council can now monitor call

pick-up rates and customer satisfaction far better than it ever could before as well.

Since Damovo installed the IP solution, South Kesteven District Council has identified further benefits of its new communications infrastructure. **"They may not have been key drivers,"** says Nix, **"But as we went through the project, we started to see some of the benefits of IP emerge through phone functionality and the freeing up of network points."** For example, the Council's main site is based in an old building, which in some rooms prevents new data points being installed. However, with IP telephony, organisations do not have to install separate voice and data network points but can share the same network point, considerably minimising the amount of disruption to the existing infrastructure.

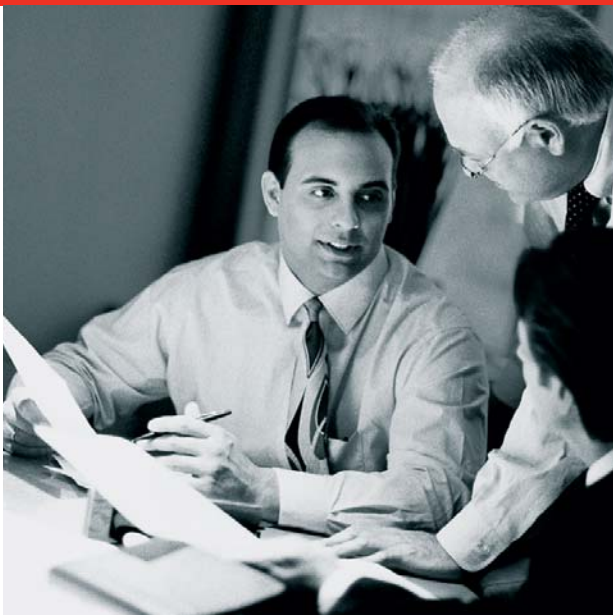
"We had a very good team from Damovo and I have nothing but praise for them...the Project Manager did a spectacularly good job"



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WITH IP TELEPHONY, ORGANISATIONS CAN SHARE THE SAME NETWORK POINT



“...definitely seeing the advantages of having a well-managed network with one vendor solution”

From Nix’s perspective, managing only one support contract for both voice and data is also a significant benefit. **“Before we had an ad hoc network supported by different vendors, so this gave us a chance to start again with a brand new network,”** he adds. **“At the tender stage, we might not have understood as clearly the benefits and challenges of starting again, but now we’re definitely seeing the advantages of having a well-managed network with one vendor solution.”**

Looking ahead, the Council plans to find out ways it could be maximising its IP network further. **“We’re starting to offer homeworking and remote working to some staff by giving them access to their PC as if they were in the office. What we want to do next is bring in the telephony side as well,”** he says. A recent visit from Damovo’s support team to demonstrate new phones from Mitel indicated that their strategies are in alignment. **“We like where they are going and we can definitely see some of the benefits,”** agrees Nix. For residents in South Kesteven, who will benefit from any improvements to the services the Council provides, it’s another opportunity to take pride in their district and Council.

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