



## How SIMS Claims Services grew by 580% in three years



Royal Tunbridge Wells based SIMS Claims Services is a claims management service provider to the insurance market. They work on behalf of several clients including the largest internet based insurance company in the UK. SIMS is part of the Supplier and Incident Management Solutions group which provides total outsourcing solutions for insurers and in 2009 the company was purchased by insurance giant AXA.

Dean Fairhurst, Contact Centre Manager at SIMS Claims Services says the company philosophy is to be the provider of choice in outsourced motor insurance claims handling to blue chip clients and to deliver market-leading service to clients' customers within the scope of their insurance policy and client's preferred claims handling policy.

"I joined SIMS in 2007 at a time of very rapid growth for the company. It had become clear that our current communications system, an Avaya IP Office, would not be able to cope with our growth plans nor handle the type of communications that our customers were increasingly starting to use. What I mean by this is that telephone calls regarding insurance claims were not the only means of communication with policy holders. There was a growing demand to handle, integrate and manage web based claims, email and text 'callers' to our contact centre."

As a result of this the directors of the company had issued a specification for a new communications system to a number of prospective suppliers and had after due diligence and deliberation selected Reading based Avaya Business Partner IP Integration to provide an Avaya Communications Manager platform together with the Callmedia contact centre solution.

Fairhurst says he was impressed with the chosen solution and set about planning the implementation in June 2007.

*"At that time SIMS had around 100 staff of which 22 worked in our claims handling contact centre. The fact that the whole solution was implemented without a hitch is testament to the amount of detailed planning that went into the project management carried out by ourselves and IP Integration. This was the smoothest communications infrastructure implementation I have ever undertaken."*

The system at Royal Tunbridge Wells went live over a weekend in November 2007 and their other office a short distance away in Tonbridge followed in March 2008.

"There were a number of really excellent features that we liked in Callmedia that would prove to be highly productivity enhancing," says Fairhurst.

"From a supervisor or team leader perspective the Callmedia user interface is excellent. It provides us the ability to change the status of staff in the claims department through simple programming. Significantly for a dynamic company that likes to get things done quickly we can do this ourselves without calling the comms department for assistance.

A recent example of how this works in practice was during the winter of 2009/10 when the UK suffered from the worst snow storms in a generation.

Within 20 minutes of recognising the snow was going to be a longer term major problem I was able to program a new call queue and announce a dedicated 'Snow Line' for reporting and progressing snow related accident claims as well as place a specialist team on the project to handle the calls.

Here was a situation that was literally 'snowballing' and had to be kept under close control. As repair garages were mostly closed for the duration of the snow we transferred staff from managing repairs to managing new claims.

Callmedia was able to provide SIMS with specific snow related management reports and after the snow had cleared we reviewed all of our actions, the lessons learned and produced a 'Snow Plan' should we ever face such a situation again in the future."

### Flexibility

"Callmedia is the most flexible program I have ever used," says Dean Fairhurst. "This is particularly the case when it comes to call blending. Presently, out of every 100 claims 'calls' we receive 73% are telephone, 25% are email and the remainder just a few text messages. We set service level agreement (SLA) targets for each of these media; 10 seconds to answer a phone call, 30 minutes for text and four hours for email.

Callmedia presents staff with calls based on these SLAs to provide us balanced call handling and hooks in to our main claims system. Here, when a customer completes a web based claim report Callmedia provides us with a list of these customers to call back.

Reporting through Callmedia is excellent; we can drill right down to individuals and look at teams or even whole departments and because Callmedia is installed across both of our sites we can transfer call between departments with the call information attached."

Fairhurst carries out all the 'adds, moves and changes' to the Callmedia application himself with very little need to refer back to IP Integration's help desk.

The implementation of the Avaya Communications Manager and Callmedia has enabled SIMS to grow to whatever size and site we chose. Our relationship with IP Integration is very positive – they always deliver

# How SIMS Claims Services grew by 580% in three years



on what we have asked for and been there for us every step of the way. Their excellent training has enabled SIMS to be highly self-sufficient – nothing is holding us back!”

## IP Integration says...

IP Integration first became involved with SIMS when they were a start up organisation with around 100 staff. SIMS knew they would be growing at an exponential rate over a three year period and at the time they had an Avaya IP Office phone system. Whilst that system was fine for their current needs, there was no way it would be able to address the demands of a company that was set for rapid expansion. They invited a number of companies, including IP Integration, to discuss the options available to them for a communications system that would grow with them.

We believe IP Integration were able to take a more strategic approach than other potential suppliers by looking at their business plans, their growth and what the communications solutions were that would deliver those plans.

We supplied a single Avaya Communications Manager system across their two sites in Kent, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. One acting as a master and one acts as an ESS (Enterprise Survivable Server).

Providing three levels, or options for business continuity, the Avaya Communications Manager has ‘out of the box’ survivability for basic core functionally to be maintained at a satellite office in the event of the main system failing.

SIMS opted for the highest level of Avaya business continuity, Enterprise Survivability’. Here a ‘shadow’ system is located in the network so that in the event of a failure at the main site the shadow system instantly takes over complete control of communications. The shadow system is mirrored to reflect any changes to configuration that are effected on the main system and the shadow can be located anywhere in the world.

This configuration gives SIMS a very resilient and efficient solution as it is managed and programmed as a single entity, yet in the event of a problem both sites can continue to function independently.

The Callmedia solution was also supplied in a resilient format, with shadowed servers at both sites. As SIMS is FSA regulated and needs to record all calls we installed Verint based call recording across both sites. The sites are linked by a high bandwidth (100Mbps) private data circuit. Overall the solution IP Integration provided is ‘heavy duty’. There are guaranteed service levels SIMS needs to provide for their customers – their whole mantra is they are a web based organisation for customer service and not a call centre.

## SIMS says...

Dean Fairhurst, “At the time of the initial implementation we had 100 staff with 22 people working in our claims handling section. Today we have more than 450 staff and 128 people in the claims handling department. It would be accurate to say that without the IP Integration Avaya Callmedia solution we could not have achieved that rate of expansion.”

Another area where IP Integration improved operational efficiency was in getting call automatically to the rights SIMS case handler. Typically the majority of SIMS claims handlers had their own direct dial number (DDI) which allowed customer to quickly access their claims handler for a particular case, and in theory, improved the service.

The problem however was that case handlers change from case to case but customers who have a DDI number for a case handler will typically use it all the time and consequently on subsequent and separate claims get through to the wrong case handler.

The solution to this problem recommended by IP Integration was to switch to one DDI number per department monitored by Callmedia and add CTI Labs innovative ID ME Interactive Voice Response (IVR) solution. Using Callmedia Enterprise Director to identify and verify the caller prior to the call hitting an agent the ID ME solution ensures the call is intelligently routed to the correct claims handler. This dramatically improves first contact resolution and ensures fair distribution of non case specific calls. The result is that the right contact gets delivered to the right place at the right time, based on who the customer is and not just the number they called.

## About IP Integration

Our goal is very simple: to help our clients derive the maximum benefit from technology through flexible tailored solutions, and we measure our success on your return on investment with us and on your continued loyalty, won through the excellence of service we guarantee to every one of our clients.

We know that developing the most successful communications infrastructure and managing new telephony, data and application services is a significant challenge facing businesses today. At IP Integration we understand that organisations must evolve their communications strategy, and through proven knowledge, experience and support, we provide complete business communications solutions.

Our voice, data, and systems integration solutions embrace the technology of the converged multi-service network for businesses of all sizes and the partnerships we have developed with the industry's leading players coupled with our in-house bespoke software solutions allow us to offer unparalleled levels of application integration to our customers.

