



## Migrating to a managed service provider that understands and adds value



As one of southern England's largest housing associations, Southern Housing Group owns and manages 25,000 homes for more than 66,000 residents. Established in 1901 the organisation employs more than 900 people and works with more than 70 local authorities.

Southern Housing Group had an existing mature implementation of Avaya Communications Manager that supported the communications needs of a dispersed organisation – spread across eight sites including their Headquarters in Fleet House in London and a busy high profile contact centre based in Horsham, West Sussex.

However, as IT Support Services Manager Alan Thew explains, while the Avaya solution met and exceeded the business need, a change was needed.

*"We conducted a review of our system, and concluded that a fully managed solution would be a lot better suited to our organisation".*

Following a tender process, the Group selected three suppliers from the eight that responded to present their Managed Service solutions. From that short-list they awarded the managed Service contract for the Avaya Communications Manager to Reading-based Avaya Gold Partner, IP Integration.

"IP Integration was chosen for many reasons. They took the time to really understand what we wanted from a managed service – other companies still did not understand that we did not want to go to the expense of employing a full time support engineer. IP Integration offered a fully managed solution with guaranteed account review meetings– which was exactly what we wanted".

Technical competence was a key factor and although IP Integration, as an Avaya Gold reseller, had achieved the highest accreditation possible Southern Housing were further assured by references they received from existing IP Integration customers and were impressed by the professionalism, experience and qualifications of IP Integration staff.

"IP Integration spoke at a level that we understood and translated our less technical list of requirements in to a professional solution that has proved cost effective for our organisation".

### The Solution

IP Integration Account Manager John Bacon explains, "What we do for Southern Housing Group is a lot more than standard 'Break-Fix Maintenance', it is a true managed service operation. The Group made a strategic decision not to have their staff skilled in the administration and management of their Avaya telephone systems and outsource all their needs." Managed Service solutions from IP Integration work because we know that during the course of any contract there will be times when changes will need to be made to the supported infrastructure. It is vital that such change is managed and changes do not impact on any other part of the infrastructure and that's why IP Integration engineers follow the best practice change control and testing.

Alan Thew says, "Each month, as part of our managed service fee, we pre-pay for a number of 'adds, moves and changes' and administration to the telephony systems which is all outsourced to IP Integration. *There have been projects that IP Integration has undertaken that fall outside the scope of our managed services contract, such as the remote worker facility and new fault tolerant Avaya equipment they have supplied. Here IP Integration carried out an audit of our systems and advised the Group on what we needed for a fully redundant system, which we then purchased.*

With regards to the flexibility of having staff work from home IP Integration has supplied two options: either an Avaya IP telephone at home connected to a broadband service or a soft phone client on the user's PC. We will be rolling this service out to key staff throughout the coming year."

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## Future Plans

CTI Labs is a team of specialists within IP Integration that provide voice and media enabled applications that help organisations improve productivity, reduce costs and deliver new services in new ways to their customers. The team combines technical expertise in both CTI and IVR technologies with an understanding of how organisations provide service to their customers and transact business.

As well as the primary Managed Service being delivered by IP Integration, the CTI Labs team has fully engaged with the Southern Housing contact centre and is looking at the operational challenges in the business with the Group.

*"We are currently examining potential new communications solutions with the CTI Labs team at IP Integration that could see us implement self-service strategies through the deployment of their ME range of integrated applications. We are also looking at the development of our Horsham contact centre through the deployment of pro-active outbound contact management and automated inbound speech self-service."*

Louie Malatesta, Director of the CTI Labs team commented, "Over the last ten years we built our in house programming skills to the point where we have been providing customers with a number of innovative, easy to use automation applications that delivered business enhancing processes with rapid returns on investment to the users. Now in a cohesive and integrated set of applications ME really is a product of its time and is all about self-service and automation – lowering the costs of user transactions. In the recent past many users have been fearful over such applications due to their mistrust of automation technology and to be frank, a poor implementation track record by some vendors.

ME is very different; at the core is the Modular Engine driving off the shelf applications that can be customised, mixed and matched and ultimately fully tailored to meet each customer's needs."

Alan Thew of Southern Housing Group says, "At present we are going through a consultative stage with our residents, as they are an important part of the decision making process about how we provide services to them. The ME products are very good and we would anticipate labour savings to be made.

We are evaluating the use of ME Interactive Voice Response systems in our Horsham contact centre where the solution will need to handle the 270,000 calls our 60 agents take from residents every year and so far we like what we hear. We focus on the quality of the overall call handling, as we want to provide our agents with the best opportunity to deliver a good service to our residents.

Our relationship with IP Integration is such that we understand and recognise they are the experts in their field and we have full confidence in the recommendations they make. It's a brave step for an organisation to make but we are sure of our ground.

It's a very good relationship. There are very few issues that crop up throughout a year and they are highly responsive to our need for an effective and reliable communications solution. IP Integration looks after all eight of our offices through the south of England and we recently renewed our contract with them without hesitation."

## 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.

