

Client St Ives plc
Date 2005 - 2006
Project Group Voice Systems
Role Project Manager

Background St Ives plc is a multinational printing company with about thirty production sites and support offices in the UK, USA and Europe. Following the retirement of a director of the company, responsibility for terrestrial voice systems passed to the Finance Director. St Ives plc had grown by acquisition and merger over a number of years. Consequently, services and equipment had been purchased under a number of company names in a number of regions and it proved impossible for BT to provide records of service or maintenance contracts and equipment purchases at the twenty UK sites. The six USA and three EU sites were locally managed and not integrated with each other or the UK sites. I had been seconded to head office and was asked to undertake a review of voice systems world-wide.

Investigation A four man team (three external consultants and me) was set up to perform the review. We performed a site-by-site audit covering circuits, equipment, contracts and invoices. We interviewed key stakeholders at each site to learn their requirements and opinions.

We proposed major changes in over thirty technical and commercial areas, to be implemented in three phases:

- Immediate changes that gave good service and cost improvements but required little or no capital investment – “the quick wins”
- Medium term changes that gave important service benefits but required modest capital expenditure – “stabilising the network”
- Longer term investments in technology that would probably benefit the company eventually but would require further investigation – “the blue skies”

Savings of up to £250,000 per annum and a project timescale of eighteen months were expected.

Implementation The proposals were accepted and a project was initiated to accomplish the first two phases. This encompassed the following:

- Consolidation of unused and underused circuits
- Cancellation of uneconomic network contracts
- Negotiation of new contract for carrier pre-selection
- Negotiation of new contracts for wholesale line rental and network services
- Negotiation for new equipment maintenance contracts
- Negotiation for new equipment leases in USA
- Recovery of tariff and maintenance overcharges
- Introduction of universal desk-to-desk short code dialling
- Introduction of centralised call logging and service monitoring
- Introduction of centralised exchange configuration management
- Replacement of five obsolete exchanges, upgrades to a further three systems
- Introduction of a centralised phone directory that works across all PCs, desk and mobile phones

Business benefits The project resulted in net savings of over £290,000 per annum in each of the first three years of operation. For the first time, managers now had accurate information about the use, performance and cost of their communication systems. Desk to desk short dialling was now consistent across the company. Equipment maintenance was now provided 24 hours a day with a four hour response.

Post-project Many of the ideas considered for the third phase of the project were not implemented because changes in the company’s market resulted in the need to mobilise the sales force. To better support the new circumstances, a mobile voice and data services integration project was instead implemented in 2007.