

Case Study



Unified Communications drives change at Mill Lane Renault

“By being more responsive to, and engaging more effectively with, the customer, we will generate more consumer goodwill and loyalty. This should, in turn, generate repeat business and of course more revenue.”

Jonathan Parr, Systems Administrator, Mill Lane Renault.

Summary

Mill Lane Renault, part of the Mill Lane Group, is based in Aldershot, Hampshire. The company has established a reputation for quality and service, supplying cars to world markets. In continuing this commitment, the dealer has upgraded its telephony system with Siemens' HiPath OpenOffice ME – a Unified Communications solution that delivers presence-based call distribution, enables free calls between sites, and interfaces with crucial dealership CRM systems to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of customer engagements.

Challenges

- Improve call distribution between sites
- Connect the right salesperson to the right customer – every time
- Integration of telephony with CRM
- Upgrade network to support PoE (Power over Ethernet)

The Solution

- Siemens HiPath OpenOffice ME – a dedicated Unified Communications appliance for SMEs
- Siemens OptiPoint 420 Standard, IP phones with cordless Plantronics headsets
- 2 x D-Link 24-port switches supporting PoE (Power over Ethernet)

Top benefits

- Future-proofing of telephony system
- Planned integration with CRM
- Integration to Outlook with presence and improved call routing
- Significantly improved customer communications and service

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Mill Lane Renault, a franchised Renault dealer based in Aldershot, is part of the Mill Lane Group, which operates a further two franchises (Fiat and Mitsubishi), a state-of-the-art accident repair centre and a Used Car Centre. The company employs some 125 staff and, since all five sites are located within close proximity of each other, efficient call distribution is essential in maintaining high levels of customer service.

As a user of Siemens telephony systems for a number of years, Mill Lane Renault has a close working relationship with its telecoms supplier, Opus Telecom, who recently offered it the chance to deploy the very latest Siemens Unified Communications solution.

"Opus Telecom offered us the new HiPath OpenOffice solution and I was very keen to take a closer look at what appeared to be an incredibly strong proposition for the retail car industry," states Jonathan Parr, Systems Administrator, Mill Lane Renault.

Re-jigging the network

Once the decision had been taken to migrate to the Siemens Unified Communications system, a network health check was conducted by Opus Telecom. This highlighted a need to upgrade its old Cat 3 cabling to Cat 5, and that the company's legacy 48-port switch had to be replaced to deliver PoE (Power over Ethernet) to support the new IP phones due to be deployed.

Installed in January 2008, the system took less than five hours to commission, and comprised two HiPath OpenOffice ME system boxes, 40 x OptiPoint '420 Standard' IP phones, and 2 x D-Link 24-port switches with PoE. "I opted for the two 24-port switches because it gives us more resilience if one goes down, and also makes everything easier to patch." Parr explains.

Also provided were wireless Plantronics headsets for hands-free operation when connected to the OptiPoint IP phones. The latter incorporate industry-standard interfaces and APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) so that new features can be added via software downloads. 'Plug & call' functionality reduces the cost of MACs (Moves, Adds and Changes), while compatibility with a range of protocols ensures flexibility.

Driving business with change

Installing Siemens' latest Unified Communications appliance has given Mill Lane Renault access to advanced IP telephony features including:

- Presence capabilities – combined with an Attendant Console facility, sales and service teams can control their availability and accessibility of key salespeople
- Microsoft Outlook plug-in – provides a single mailbox for managing emails, voicemails and faxes
- Call functionality – such as the ability of sales staff to check others' voicemail for important messages or change presence status, and a call journal (for call tracking)

For Mill Lane Renault, Siemens' presence-aware functionality has delivered flexibility and agility to the dealership's sales and service professionals, while significantly improving responsiveness to incoming calls. With the user interface applications provided by HiPath OpenOffice (Attendant Console and myPortal) for example, when calls are received by the switchboard, the receptionist can view the 'presence' status of the requested party and route the call accordingly. myPortal also provides convenient dialling aids via favourites and phone directory options.

According to Parr: "I'm delighted with HiPath OpenOffice. Presence, combined with intelligent call routing, is of critical importance to us. Being able to immediately see the availability of the right salesperson when a call comes in is vital in ensuring we maintain a consistency of contact for the customer which inevitably leads to a better relationship.

"As a business with multiple sites, free calls between offices will significantly reduce our costs, and the ability to transfer calls between departments will help us streamline our communications processes.

"The combined attendant console provides 'at a glance' visibility, and the system gives us different voicemail boxes for different statuses, which is rather impressive (although we don't use it to the full yet). That's a significant advantage over the system we had before," Parr adds.

Although Mill Lane Renault is still in the process of upgrading its network to Microsoft Exchange, once complete, all staff will have full email and Outlook integration and, in the future, direct access to fax over IP. This integration also gives access to the call journal facility, which allows users to display call histories, track both customers and vendors, and also click to call a contact back.

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Mill Lane Renault www.milllane.co.uk

Mill Lane Renault is also planning an upgrade to its ageing CRM (Customer Relationship Management) package and, when this has been installed, it will interface directly with HiPath OpenOffice.

"If the CLI number of an incoming call is recognised by the CRM database, then the facility will be there for whoever rings-in to be automatically put through to the last person they spoke to. In addition, all of the customer's data (e.g. service history) will be brought up onscreen. This will have massive business benefits. Again, this is about being more responsive to, and engaging more effectively with, the customer. We will generate more goodwill and loyalty. This should, in turn, generate repeat business, and of course, more revenue," concludes Parr.

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