

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council on target for e-government

UK council implements voice and data network to hit Government targets, slash costs and improve communications

TRAFFORD
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH



Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council has to meet stringent e-government targets for 2005. It was struggling to achieve these goals with its antiquated, outsourced telephony system. It installed a voice and data network using Alcatel's OmniPCX Enterprise and Alcatel's carrier

class data infrastructure, OmniSwitch. These technologies have provided an improved internal and external communications system. Additionally, the technology has generated cost efficiency through easier management of the system and reduced call costs.

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council is a combination of 228 sites, from schools to children's homes. There are up to 600 employees at each location. As part of the UK Government's initiative to offer all council services online by 2005, the Council must ensure its communications infrastructure is capable of handling applications that will enable its employees to manage services to the new required standards.

"The strength of the Alcatel model allows you to have both digital and VoIP technology running seamlessly, therefore reducing your implementation costs substantially. We have been able to save money, which we have churned into other projects and invested in our staff, to support further e-government initiatives."

*Mark Gibbison, head of e-government,
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council*

Alcatel OmniSwitch and OmniPCX Enterprise win through

A rapid return on investment was key to the project. Gibbison explained that the Council wished to quickly invest money saved with a more efficient infrastructure, directly into other e-government projects. Gibbison said the Alcatel OmniPCX Enterprise and Alcatel OmniSwitch were the best fit for the Council, as Alcatel's solutions allowed the Council to choose the pace

of a pure IP roll out. The Council is in the process of rolling out a predominantly IP telephony network, using Alcatel OmniPCX Enterprise with digital handsets and VoIP connecting each site. The roll-out of a pure IP infrastructure, using Alcatel OmniSwitch and Alcatel IP phones, has only been implemented where the Council deemed it necessary, starting

with the Council's new town hall Greenfield site. The OmniSwitch data solution was implemented and is now supported by EDS Global Field Services, while EDS worked with Alcatel partner, Freedom Communications, in an Alcatel Synergy relationship to install Alcatel's OmniPCX Enterprise.

Challenges

- Meet e-government targets for 2005
- Improve internal and external communication infrastructure
- Save money to reinvest in other e-government projects

Solutions

- Alcatel OmniSwitch data switching product
- Alcatel OmniPCX Enterprise
- Alcatel IP phones

Benefits

- Saving of over EUR 750,000 per year
- Inhouse, centralised management of communications infrastructure
- State of the art voice and data network
- Improved internal and external communications for employees
- Closer to hitting 2005 e-government targets

Poor functionality limits council

Pressure from the UK government to create an accessible local government infrastructure tasked the Council with improving its communication systems. The Council had been using a BT Featurenet managed telecommunication service. Rental costs for that service were high, according to head of e-government for the Council, Mark Gibbison. He said that the system was inflexible; for instance, adding an extension took around 28 days. Also, it had limited functionality, even without voicemail, which affected the Council's ability to run a fully featured call centre for local users. Gibbison commented: "Our old BT Featurenet system was quite old and involved very high costs to keep it going. We looked at converging our voice and data networks using voice over internet protocol (VoIP) technology.

We realised that by linking the two networks, we could make substantial cost savings that would allow us to fund other IT e-government projects."

E-government forces change

Impending e-government deadlines forced Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council to make the decision to upgrade its communication infrastructure. The Council needed to improve its communication systems, while saving money on previous overheads to reinvest in other e-government projects. It realised that a converged voice and data network could give it the technological basis to move forward, plus save money with cheaper call costs and moving communications management in house.

Significant savings reinvested in new projects

After an investment of EUR 1.5 million into the new infrastructure, the Council expects a return on investment within 15 months of the completion of the project. Gibbison said the Council predicts it will make savings of over EUR 750,000 per year, once the full infrastructure is implemented. One of the biggest benefits is the Council's ability to manage its own network from a single point in house, saving money and improving flexibility. The Council has made savings of 50% on line rental. Also, call cost per minute has dropped by 50%. The end goal is to achieve 50% cheaper calls overall.

Technology pushes Council into the future

Thanks to Alcatel's technology, the Council is creating a state of the art communications infrastructure that will save it money, while providing improved communication efficiencies. Improvement is also seen in accessibility and accountability to the local community, due to the addition of new functionality. The saved money generated by the Alcatel infrastructure will be ploughed into further projects to enable the Council to hit its 2005 e-government deadline. When the complete infrastructure is rolled out and its new call centre is in place, Gibbison said the Council will begin implementing a unified messaging solution across the network. It intends to get its entire infrastructure operating over VoIP by the end of the financial year ending 2005.



Business Partner Info

EDS Global Field Services installs innovative voice and data solution

Alcatel premier business partner, EDS Global Field Services, is a desktop and infrastructure services provider that enables public sector organisations to improve efficiencies, whilst lowering ICT costs. EDS Global Field Services understood the needs of the Council, delivering a complete voice and data solution within tight time scales. The Council has benefited by continuing to make use of the investment made in its existing data infrastructure, while being better able to utilise the skills of its own ICT team.

Alcatel's OmniPCX Enterprise solution and its OmniSwitch carrier class platform enable businesses to run both digital and pure IP solutions together. This seamless ability to combine technologies saves money and puts the business in control of its own network roll out decisions.