TRANSPORTATION SUCCESS STORY

ShoreTel’s Open API and Workgroups Drive Greater Efficiencies for Trucking Company

A large transportation company gets behind the wheels of IP progress with a ShoreTel UC solution, for simpler, smarter and cost-effective business operations.

The inner workings of the transit industry reveal burgeoning requests and order placement from customers, high volumes of calls from truckers, and a need for greater efficiencies to meet declining budgets and growing regulatory requirements. For one of the premier truckload carriers in America, DART Transit Company, the wheels are rolling toward a better way to perform business operations with a ShoreTel UC solution.

Family owned and headquartered in Eagan, Minnesota, since 1934, DART is a financially strong and growing company providing transcontinental and short-haul services to Fortune 500 corporations through a network of shipping, logistics, brokerage, warehousing, rail, and storage offerings.

Driven to Succeed

DART was supporting thousands of calls each day through its primary mode of communications: a mid-1980’s Mitel SX-2000 PBX system. To allay the strains of an outdated telephone system, DART had installed voice response systems, and shifted a portion of its order placements to electronic transmittals that come through employees’ desktops. And its fleet of 2,000-plus trucks is equipped with a computer terminal in each vehicle for communicating routine information between driver and office, with exceptions still handled through phone calls. Yet DART continued to struggle with a lack of visibility and functionality necessary for better call routing and tracking, faster response times, and easier, cohesive communications.

“We had every inherent characteristic of an outdated phone system running in a growth-minded modern company. The company has been running a unique call routing environment that basically funnels to one person; there was very limited integration of the phone system with internal business processes and custom applications; and there were long wait times for incoming calls, sometimes 10 or 20 minutes. We needed a simpler, quicker and more efficient way to manage the business,” said Dan Lyddy, vice president of information systems for DART Transit Company.
Wheels in Motion

DART evaluated systems from Mitel, Avaya, Cisco and ShoreTel. After talking to ShoreTel reseller Transcend United Technologies, Mr. Lyddy was impressed with the simplicity of a ShoreTel Unified Communications solution. During a five-minute demonstration, Transcend United had the ShoreTel phone system up and running; and soon after, several remote offices and a customer service department were implemented and integrated with the existing Mitel PBX system.

“We considered a lot of vendor solutions. Most were too complex or inflexible or costly. Only ShoreTel was able to give us ease of management, open APIs for flexible integration, extensive workgroup functionality, and a lower total cost of ownership. People often undervalue open API capabilities. But for us, ShoreTel’s open API platform was a big deal because we have so many custom-built applications and need to ensure flawless integration,” Mr. Lyddy said.

To unify six primary locations and numerous remote sites, DART selected a ShoreTel UC solution, comprising 640 ShoreTel IP Phones with VPN connectivity, multiple ShoreTel Voice Switches, and ShoreTel Communicator with Personal and Workgroup Agent access.

Brokering Workgroups

More than 300 ShoreTel IP Phones were installed at DART headquarters, replacing antiquated systems and accommodating the new building addition. Mr. Lyddy and his team were rapidly setting up workgroups for customer service groups, drivers, and safety activities. Six weeks later, during the implementation of 100 phones at DART’s next largest office in Dallas, Texas, the maximum number of workgroups had been reached.

“We worked with the ShoreTel team to quickly resolve the limit issue. Now we are running more than 200 workgroups on a single ShoreTel system. The workgroups have already become indispensible: callers are reaching their intended destination much quicker and more accurately, and now when staff is not available, the calls are routed to the next available workgroup member. We’ve seen call wait times almost disappear with no waiting in call queues because the system makes it easier to locate the right employee on the first attempt,” Mr. Lyddy said. In cases where additional information is required to track down a call routing problem, Mr. Lyddy can use reports provided by the ShoreTel system to quickly identify and address these issues.

ShoreTel Communicator with Workgroup Agent access supports an extensive suite of functions, such as drag-and-drop call transfers, access and monitoring of workgroup queues, workgroup voice mailboxes, and basic reporting capabilities.

“Now we have 322 people using ShoreTel Communicator with Workgroup Agent access. My team built a widget on the back of ShoreTel Workgroups to eliminate the wait time for drivers to talk to staff, instead initiating a call-back request. That means the ShoreTel system will automatically send our agents a prompt to call the driver back once that agent completes the current phone call,” he added.

Efficiencies Lighten the Load

Transcend United trained DART users in the week leading up to implementation and worked with Lyddy’s team to configure the system. “Users initially resisted the new technology—that evaporated overnight. ShoreTel is so easy to use and manage. Now the company can’t imagine using anything else and it’s been immersed into our culture,” Lyddy said.

The ShoreTel open API platform has enabled DART to implement several customized applications integrating the ShoreTel UC system with its enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution to improve business processes. One of these programs allows office users to click on a desktop icon to dial customers or drivers directly from the ERP application, eliminating misdials and speeding calls. Another application integrated through ShoreTel to the ERP system acts as a visual caller ID, displaying the driver’s ID information on the ERP message board and with a single click, so agents can pull up the driver’s information automatically and see the driver’s identification data and
“We considered a lot of vendor solutions. Most were too complex or inflexible or costly. Only ShoreTel was able to give us ease of management, open APIs for flexible integration, extensive workgroup functionality, and a lower total cost of ownership.”

Dan Lyddy
Vice President of Information Systems
DART Transit Company

DART takes in almost 6,000 calls per day from drivers through one 800 number and one in-house system. “The integration through ShoreTel has made it simpler for drivers and faster for agents. Rather than each driver being issued his or her own 800 telephone number, they all use the same toll-free number, and are prompted with a menu of choices to call in requests, routing, loading and transportation information—and they’re done,” he explained.

Using the open API integration with ShoreTel, DART has gained efficiencies through an automated recruiting system that enhances communications with prospective drivers, and a driver paging function designed to page drivers when family members call into the ShoreTel number.

The company also has an automated outbound dialing system that calls drivers’ cell phones when they are away from the computer terminal and in their trucks, to tell them about their next load. “In the past, drivers had to hang out in their trucks so that they didn’t miss a load,” Mr. Lyddy explained. “Now, they can be anywhere they have cell phone coverage. We were able to add this application without spending a single dime on additional hardware beyond the voicemail servers we already have.”

Logbook of Savings

Just as truckers log miles and information into their logbooks, DART is logging savings since switching to the ShoreTel UC system. “We have a gate access system without a guard post,” Mr. Lyddy said. “Rather than needing to staff a guard station 24/7 to verify information with each driver at the gate, the driver now dials into our ShoreTel system and submits information through the voice response system. This triggers entry or exit through the gates. The ShoreTel system collects the data and updates the ERP to verify and log the information. This represents a significant savings because as the company continues to grow, we won’t need to hire additional guards.”

While considering communications vendors, DART had an interest in call recording software, but found it to be too expensive for the amount they would use it. “With ShoreTel, we simply built our own call recording application using ShoreTel software and API platform. The API supplies functions, such as start recording, stop recording and so on, enabling us to easily customize it for our needs,” Mr. Lyddy elaborated.

DART is realizing cost savings related to maintenance previously outsourced, and the elimination of T1 lines and extra data lines no longer required. Also, DART is using the ShoreTel VPN Solution, to provide continuity primarily for the brokerage division. “That group has a lot of small offices and with the ShoreTel VPN Concentrator and telephones—plus 4-digit dialing—reaching each other is easier and quicker than before. For us, the VPN solution is more cost effective and easier to support. We were able to eliminate POTS lines at each of those locations by switching to the VPN phones, which saves us a good deal of money and provides better performance to boot,” Mr. Lyddy said.

Pushing the Limits of Technology

DART is a company that tends to push the limits of technology. “My boss has been known to ask if we can do this or that—something technologically advanced. Now, with ShoreTel folded into our technology, it is a lot easier to say yes,” Mr. Lyddy said.

To back up the front-end simplicity and convenience that DART users enjoy, ShoreTel supplies fully redundant distributed architecture and switch failover. “Our servers are distributed to different locations, and we are also using a Double Take software solution from ShoreTel’s technology partner together with the ShoreTel system to ensure reliability and 24/7 availability. It’s great to have that kind of peace of mind,” Mr. Lyddy added.
Yet another unique way that DART is capitalizing on the ShoreTel technology is by integrating 89 SIP trunking licenses and Mediatrix VoIP access devices to provide faxes via email. While the old analog telephones and fax machines are still in place to transmit faxes, the combination of SIP trunking and IP-PBX allows DART to trim more costs, integrate faxes with email, protect existing investments, and accelerate the ease of keyboard faxing.

Hitting the Highway

DART is pleased with its ShoreTel implementation and results. “ShoreTel has altered our universe with such ease and efficiency,” Mr Lyddy concluded. “We can do so much more with our UC solution than we even thought feasible. People are more productive and like all the functionality. Drivers appreciate the ease of doing business from the road. And our customers are getting superior service faster. And as a company, we’re saving time, money and are better equipped to meet our ever-changing business needs.”

About ShoreTel

ShoreTel is a provider of business communication solutions whose brilliantly simple unified communications platforms, applications and mobile UC solutions promise a new rhythm of workforce engagement and collaboration. With costly complexity eliminated by design from its award winning, all-in-one IP phone system, UC and contact center solution, and its industry leading hosted business phone system, workers enjoy a freedom and self-reliance that other providers can’t match. Users have full control to engage and collaborate, no matter the time, place or device, for the lowest cost and demand on IT resources in the industry. ShoreTel is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, and has regional offices and partners worldwide. For more information, visit shoretel.com or shoretelsky.com