SPORTS/ENTERTAINMENT SUCCESS STORY

Monumental Sports Trades Away Legacy PBX to Draft ShoreTel for Winning Unified Communications

Premier sports and entertainment company puts ShoreTel UC into the game to simplify real-time communications, support sales efforts, and improve reachability during events.

Sports are timeless phenomena of their own making—the loyalty of fans, the artistry of athletic performance, the showmanship of competition. And Monumental Sports has it all.

As one of the largest and most diverse integrated sports and entertainment companies in America, Monumental Sports owns and operates three professional sports teams: the NBA’s Washington Wizards, NHL’s Washington Capitals, and WNBA’s Washington Mystics. The company also owns the popular Verizon Center, a premier venue in Washington, D.C., and oversees the management of Kettler Capitals Iceplex, the state-of-the-art training facility for the Capitals, and George Mason University’s Patriot Center.

As the world of sports continues to evolve, so does the need to provide high-performing and dynamic communications. Advanced communications technologies have helped to revolutionize the way teams, facilities and fans can engage and interact. Monumental Sports hosts hundreds of events annually, and ensuring seamless communications throughout its facilities is critical to success.

Unfortunately, the company had an aging PBX system in place that was inflexible, limited in its features, and increasingly difficult to administer. And with no more product support available, Monumental Sports was in need of a winning score.

Scouting for UC Talent

Monumental Sports considered possible Voice over IP solutions from Avaya and Cisco, and then contacted IPC, a leading IT solutions provider and ShoreTel Gold Champion Partner. The team at IPC convinced Monumental Sports to take a look at ShoreTel Unified Communications. “They came out with a ShoreTel system basically in a suitcase. They were the only vendor who could demonstrate right in front of us how the system worked, how it was managed and show us the phones actually in use. That was impressive,” says Gordon Armstrong, the senior director of IT at Monumental Sports.
Armstrong and his staff next visited the IPC main office in nearby Richmond, Virginia for a complete demonstration of the ShoreTel UC Solution, and a tour of the IPC facility, including the technologically progressive TechFirst network operations center (NOC). A NOC typically is essential a command center for managing and monitoring networks over a computer or telecommunications or satellite.

“We dropped into many of the different departments, and all the people were extremely friendly. We also visited the TechFirst NOC where they monitor all their customers’ systems. It is very impressive,” Armstrong says.

After further evaluation of ShoreTel in comparison to the other vendors being considered for Monumental Sports, Armstrong signed with ShoreTel and IPC. “We liked the phone system, we liked IPC and we liked the people there, so we decided to let them bid on the project. And we were surprised when the pricing came in very low compared to the other vendors. So we took a second and third look and decided to go with ShoreTel and IPC,” he furthers.

Designing a Winning Team

Monumental Sports selected a ShoreTel UC Solution that includes ShoreTel Director, 1,500 ShoreTel IP Phones and licenses, and the Salesforce.com™ Call Center Adapter by ShoreTel.

ShoreTel is able to deliver on the promise of unified communications by seamlessly integrating voice, video, instant messaging and data for the desktop and mobile devices. The ShoreTel IP platform features a fully distributed and scalable architecture with N+1 redundancy for five nines of availability. Intelligent core software provides all the essential capabilities, including voice routing, automated attendant, unified messaging, call accounting and reporting, robust workgroup routing, and other advanced telephony features.

Acting as general manager of the solution, ShoreTel Director is a web-based management tool that adds comprehensive visibility into the system. It coordinates out-of-the-box integration with Microsoft Outlook so that Monumental Sports staff can effectively manage communications in real time, instantly accessing calendars and directories and proficiently handling incoming calls.

Also a key member of the team is ShoreTel Salesforce.com Call Center Adapter. Monumental Sports is using Salesforce.com Call Center Adapter to unite call routing and handle all business communications within one application via the use of ShoreTel Softphone located on the sidebar of any Salesforce.com web page. The adapter is easily customized to create integrated call reports, which are fully linked with Salesforce.com data. Users can click on any hyperlinked phone number field on account records or individual contact information to place calls, and inbound calls will trigger Salesforce.com screen pops for real-time collaboration and faster call resolution.

“We have about 220 events a year — that’s 220 nights when we have anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 people in our building. Thanks to IPC and ShoreTel, our staff can keep in touch with each other as well as the fans who come to our events,” Armstrong explains.

Coaching Installation and Training

IPC managed installation and training of the ShoreTel implementation. Monumental Sports staff had hoped to have the new phone system in place during the summer rather than during the busy fall sports season to avoid any glitches.

“It was November before we were able to do the install, which was scary for us. But IPC did a great job. We got everything working on the ShoreTel system and put the new phones side-by-side with the Siemens phones. It gave our people a chance to get used to the new phones before cutting over to the new system,” says Armstrong.
After IPC trained all 500 Monumental Sports employees on the ShoreTel system, it was time to plan the cut over from the old PBX. With such a busy events schedule, Armstrong wanted to ensure the new system went live on a day when nothing was scheduled. The cut over was squeezed into a day before a big event, so there was zero room for error. IPC handled the implementation cut over without incident, and the ShoreTel system was up and running by the end of the day.

**Scoring the Winning Points**

It has been two years since the ShoreTel system was deployed at Monumental Sports to supply IP telephony, state-of-the-art conferencing, voicemail and data tools for faster, easier maneuverability across the enterprise. To put points on the scoreboard, sports teams must have a winning strategy and the right people executing plays. IPC and ShoreTel help Monumental Sports continue to score winning points with extensive flexibility and unified communications.

For staff members who work at remote facilities but come to the Verizon Center for events no longer worry about missing calls. Now they can simply log into any available phone to accept calls, access voicemail and use other features on the ShoreTel system.

“Because of the nature of our work, we have a lot of seasonal employees, so we’re adding and deleting users and moving phones a lot. Before, we had a separate phone system, a separate voice mail system, a separate email system and a separate conferencing system. And we had to manage every user within each system. With the ShoreTel solution, everything is combined into one interface and users have one login. That’s what really excited us about the system,” mentions Armstrong.

From an administrative point of view, Armstrong also cites the ease of management in comparison to the old PBX. He had two IT staffers who with extensive training on the old system just so they could add and change phones. “My lower-level help desk people are now able to add and delete phones, change services and add features with no problem at all. It’s the easiest interface of any of the three voice systems we looked at,” he says.

For ongoing needs, Monumental Sports relies on world-class support through the IPC TechFirst. “IPC is very knowledgeable and their TechFirst response center is right on. If I ever have a problem I give them a call — which in truth is very rare because the system works so great. I think in two years I had to call them maybe four times, mostly for information about upgrades and how to enable certain features. I don’t know if you can tell, but I’m a pretty happy customer. Working with ShoreTel and IPC has been a great experience. The system works perfectly for us,” closes Armstrong.

**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

---

Gordon Armstrong  
Senior Director of IT  
Monumental Sports