GOVERNMENT SUCCESS STORY

ShoreTel Helps the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency Revitalize Service to Neighborhoods

A public redevelopment agency revitalizes telephone productivity, simplifies business operations and improves customer service across the city, county and community by implementing a ShoreTel UC solution.

The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) is a Joint Powers Authority created by the City and County of Sacramento to represent both jurisdictions for affordable housing and community redevelopment needs. The Agency serves as the Housing Authority for the City and County of Sacramento and is the leading public developer of affordable housing and oversees residential and commercial revitalization activities in 15 redevelopment areas throughout the City and County.

SHRA has a 2011 budget of $250 million. The Agency operates with approximately 291 employees and is one of the largest landlords in Sacramento with 3,500 units of affordable housing. Additionally the Agency administers 11,000 rental assistance vouchers every month. Community development activities include economic development, affordable housing development, and neighborhood improvements such as streets, sidewalks, parks, and community centers.

With two distinct PBX telephone systems supporting but splitting the agency, and no centralized directory, the organization’s ability to effectively communicate with its stakeholders and staff was hampered. With aging telephony equipment, a desire to upgrade to IP-based communications and plans to move into a new location, the agency turned to ShoreTel for help.

Revitalizing Communications

With staff dispersed across 16 locations and using old phone technology, communications across the organization was cumbersome and productivity sometimes suffered. To improve customer service and internal work processes, the agency decided to implement a modern communications infrastructure and VoIP.

“We had an Avaya PBX system supporting half the locations and a Centrex system for the rest. Consequently, there was no effective way to integrate communications or unify the phone directories. We were looking to improve productivity by putting everybody on the same phone system,
save time and money, improve customer service, and find a better solution for getting work accomplished,” said Ann Roland, IT manager for the SHRA.

Specifically, agency employees wanted to be able to prioritize voicemail messages, quickly connect with whoever they needed to talk to, and have one cohesive phone directory. The IT department required a system that is easy to maintain without increasing staffing levels, and seamlessly integrates with existing and future applications. After extensive research on potential communications vendor solutions, consulting with ShoreTel reseller AT&T and using the ShoreTel TCO Tool to build a strong business case, the agency selected a ShoreTel UC system.

“Our network infrastructure is mostly Cisco, and while we considered demonstrations from four leading vendors, only ShoreTel was able to meet all of our requirements for cost, support, simplicity and integration.”

Ann Roland
IT Manager
SHRA

“Calling for Greater Productivity

“Our managers and analysts quickly adopted the ShoreTel applications and use ShoreTel Mobile Call Manager and the built-in directory on their Blackberry devices to improve mobility and connectivity to each other. The Professional Call Manager helps us work more efficiently by allowing us to set priorities for calls and we’re excited about discovering new ways to make further use of this powerful capability. The ShoreTel Workgroups feature meets the needs of our existing call center and was priced very competitively when compared with other vendor’s call center applications. ShoreTel Office Anywhere helps our managers stay productive even when they’re away from the office or on the road and that’s a great return on our investment in this phone system.”

- Ann Roland, IT Manager, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

“Building Community with ShoreTel

The Agency’s UC solution comprises a total of 343 ShoreTel IP 265 phones and a ShoreTel Voice Switch at each of the 16 locations, including the new headquarters, to ensure survivability and redundancy. From a software standpoint, the agency IT team selected ShoreTel Professional Call Manager and ShoreTel Mobile Call Manager, and will be using ShoreTel Web Dialer to facilitate one-click dialing from the Web site.

As part of the implementation, AT&T worked with ShoreTel to provide installation and training. The Agency relies on responsive and comprehensive support from AT&T and ShoreTel: “Both ShoreTel and AT&T were able to fully understand and respond to the often unique needs of our organization,” Ms. Roland said. “The whole process went very smoothly and we quickly learned how to take full advantage of the powerful features in our ShoreTel system.”

“Saving Time, Money—and Paper

The Agency has implemented ShoreTel Emergency Notification Application for dispatching emergency calls. Whenever a 911 call is placed from anywhere in 16 locations of the system, this tool automatically generates an email that is sent to designated agency staff. The notification shows up on the screen in bold red with an audible alert, and shows the origin of the call.

As the Public Housing Authority for City and County of Sacramento, SHRA expends a lot of time processing new applications and annually certifying current residents for subsidized housing. The process of certifying participants in the Public Housing program entails numerous questions to be answered, including changes to jobs or income, and is performed for each of the 11,000 HCV voucher holders and 3,500 public housing units. Rather than collecting all of this information in paper format and then scanning into a database, HCV is piloting a process where all the information is...”
faxed into one public Microsoft Outlook folder and immediately transferred into the County’s FileNet document imaging system. This data can then be accessed through the property management application.

“ShoreTel will enable us to have seamless fax integration so we eliminate the paper trail in favor of an electric one. Data is captured into our document management system which eliminates staff from handling the documents, paper document storage and we have a manageable method for retaining these types of records now,” Ms. Roland explained. We see the possibility of using similar types of documents via faxes into a document management application for the redevelopment portion of the agency in the future as well.

**Simplifying the Ways to Work**

From seeing voicemail in Microsoft Outlook to using drag-and-drop functionality to transfer calls via the desktop, ShoreTel facilitates easier ways to work. “Since implementing ShoreTel, we have so many choices for getting the work accomplished. The four-digit dialing and ShoreTel Call Manager features accelerate call management. Staff is able to set their own call rules, and can quickly view all voicemail to better prioritize and return important calls. And we’re able to view history to track conversations and stay organized, rather than having to listen to voicemail in the order they were received. It’s as if we’ve been able to breathe new life into our desktops,” Ms. Roland added.

From a cost savings perspective, Roland estimates a 14 percent reduction in training and installation expenses over a competitor’s system, and maintenance is anticipated to be 32 percent less over the next five years, compared with the previous maintenance plan for the Avaya PBX. Because the ShoreTel system is easy to use and manage, the current help desk/desktop support staff handle all moves, adds and changes. With the ShoreTel implementation, the Agency also eliminated more than 100 old lines and circuits, for another batch of long-term savings.

“We’ve really enjoyed the ShoreTel experience. All in all, I believe the Agency is now well positioned to continue streamlining the processes that make it easier for helping the community,” Ms. Roland concluded.

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**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