



PORTLAND WATER DISTRICT DISCOVERS HOW FLUID SHORETEL IS

Portability of System Means No Downtime During
Disasters and Enterprise Contact Center
Streamlines and Improves Customer Service

Industry: Government/Utility

Installation: 4 locations, 9 ShoreGear
voice switches, 230+IP phones

Date of Install: January 2006

Challenge:

The Portland Water District was faced with an obsolete Executone PBX system that was costly and almost impossible to maintain. The organization needed a solution that would easily integrate with other systems and the network plus provide portability to work around emergencies.

Solution:

ShoreTel provided a comprehensive VoIP system, including ShoreGear voice switches and ShorePhone IP Phones.

Benefits:

- ShoreTel system is portable so communications can continue even during natural disasters.
- Enterprise Contact Center improves customer service and employee productivity.
- Management is simplified so the district can support its own moves, adds, and changes.

The Portland Water District in Maine is a quasi-municipality providing water, wastewater, and environmental services to 11 Greater Portland communities. The organization's 190 employees are dedicated to providing quality services to more than 190,000 people.

In late 2004, the water district was faced with an old Executone PBX system that had become obsolete and was costly and difficult to maintain. The organization reviewed the system to gauge whether or not it would support customers in the case of a disaster and decided it was time to make a change. The first thing the water district did was meet with an objective consulting team, in this case, representatives from RCC Consulting, based in Manchester, NH and Ron Brown Consulting, based in the Portland, ME area.

"We needed to fully assess our needs with an objective consultant and have that person help us issue a comprehensive request for proposal," said Peter Cutrone, Director of Information Services for the Portland Water District (PWD). "RCC and Ron Brown helped us determine that a Voice over IP system was the way to go because of the possibility of convergence with other needs."

After the RFP was issued, PWD looked closely at solutions from Avaya, Nortel, Cisco, ShoreTel, and others over the course of three months. Priority was placed on disaster recovery capabilities and ease of use and management. The local ShoreTel reseller brought the ShoreTel phone system into the water district office for a demonstration and Cutrone and his colleague, Network Administrator Chad Davis, and a PWD selection team were impressed with how easy it was to set up. PWD also appreciated that the ShoreTel system was cost-effective and could be easily integrated into the existing network infrastructure. A unanimous decision was made by the water district selection team to choose ShoreTel for the organization's VoIP needs.

"We were impressed with ShoreTel because it met all our needs—ease of use and administration, flexible integration to other IT systems, customer self service with IVR, budget and portability," said Cutrone. "We can set up the ShoreTel system anywhere if we're ever faced with a disaster or emergency."



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– Peter Cutrone
*Director of Information Services,
 Portland Water District*

CALLING ON SHORETEL

ShoreTel provided the Portland Water District with four of its ShoreGear-120/24 voice switches, four ShoreGear-T1 voice switches, and one ShoreGear-40/8 voice switch. The water district has dedicated one server for voice mail, one for ShoreTel’s Enterprise Contact Center, and another for ShoreWare Director, ShoreTel’s browser-based management interface, which simplifies management of the system and makes moves, adds and changes a snap. The water district is also using more than 230 of ShoreTel’s ShorePhone IP Phones, including ShorePhone 210, 530 and 560 models.

REFRESHINGLY EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

ShoreTel Enterprise Contact Center provides the Portland Water District’s customer service call center with advanced routing and multiple service options to customize the experience for callers and powerful tools that ensure the right agent answers each call quickly and effectively. Advanced routing capabilities route calls to the most appropriate call center agent based on calendar, service level, priority and other criteria.

With ShoreTel Enterprise Contact Center, call center employees are armed with key information and control, enabling a significantly higher level of personalized attention for callers. For example, before even answering an incoming call, a call-routing log displays the caller’s experience within the system to a call center operator so he or she has the information necessary to make the caller’s experience as pleasant and efficient as possible. ShoreTel Enterprise Contact Center also provides advanced real-time management and historical measurement tools that enable PWD managers to ensure agents are delivering consistent service. Performance and statistical information lets the company know how the center is performing and what needs to be done for further improvement.

“Enterprise Contact Center has allowed us to prioritize emergency calls and implement some unique call flow structures to route calls to different locations throughout the day,” said Cutrone. “For instance, if there’s a leak on a street, customers call us, and if it’s during business hours and our emergency queue is full, these calls roll over to customer service and jump to the top of the queue, and after hours, these calls roll over to the control center. We have a much more robust call flow with ShoreTel and we’re able to process emergency calls much faster now. We also appreciate the ability of the system to record calls, especially calls regarding dangerous situations—the old system wouldn’t allow us to record calls.”

ShoreTel also allowed PWD to implement an integrated voice response (IVR) system with its Oracle database that allows customers to call in for automated information on their accounts. The system also provides automatic messages to update citizens about things like ongoing repair work, water leaks, and outage updates, freeing up customer service reps during heavy call times.

MORE PRODUCTIVE USERS

ShoreTel phone systems are easy to use, simple to manage, flexible, and reliable. With the ShoreTel system in place, PWD employees across all four locations are now on the same phone and voice mail system, using 4-digit



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Network Administrator,
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dialing to reach co-workers—even those working from remote sites—and dialing them by name. The friendly, graphical interface of Call Manager provides easy access to sophisticated features, including on-the-fly conferencing and document sharing.

Voice mail messages are stored in the industry-standard WAV Audio for Windows format, allowing users to play them on multimedia PCs, attach them to e-mail messages or embed them in other documents. The ability of the ShoreTel system to track phone calls, export and distribute original voice mail messages to one person or a group of people and keep a running history of calls into each number is helpful in continually monitoring and improving customer service.

“With ShoreTel, we have better information on the calls we receive and how long they take,” said Davis. “This information is valuable in helping us analyze our staffing needs and managing the customer service group. Users also appreciate the ability to save voice mail messages and forward them to groups of co-workers.”

The ShoreTel system, integrated with Microsoft Outlook at PWD, provides integrated messaging, such as directory dialing, contact screen pop, and calendar integration. ShoreWare Personal Call Manager gives PWD employees the equivalent of a desktop PBX—a powerful, all-purpose tool for managing voice communications. With it, users can quickly browse contacts and make calls from local directories all from the desktop. Employees get unified messaging so voice mail shows up in their e-mail inbox, desktop call control allows them to control the way their phones work, and features like Follow Me Find Me allow them to have calls track them down wherever they are—at their desk, on their cell phone, or at home if they choose.

“The ShoreTel phones are much easier to use and people are using most of the features without needing to be trained extensively on the system,” said Davis. “The built-in directory is also great and our employees like the ability to dial by name and appreciate that we’ve been able to replace the outdated hard copy list of extensions.”

EASY MANAGEMENT

ShoreWare Director, ShoreTel’s browser-based management interface, allows Cutrone and Davis to gain access to the system from anywhere on the network. Through this browser, every site and feature can be managed, including the voice mail, automated attendant and desktop applications. Adding a new user is a simple matter of clicking “add new” and entering the user’s name, which creates a new mailbox and automatically updates the centralized database, voice switches, automated attendant dial-by-name and number feature and online directories—all in a matter of seconds. With ShoreWare Director, the water district saves significant time and money on employee moves, adds and changes.

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FLEXIBLE WORKGROUPS

Because ShoreTel supports workgroups, PWD can organize its departments to enhance efficiency. ShoreTel's Workgroups is designed specifically for operational efficiency, and with it PWD is able to consolidate its calls to one number per workgroup and calls are then routed to the next available person within the group. ShoreTel's Workgroups also provides the organization with basic reporting capabilities to help it measure call volume and make staffing and schedule changes as necessary. While Enterprise Contact Center has replaced Workgroups for the water district's customer service department, the organization appreciates the capability to support as many other workgroups as needed and the flexibility with which these groups can be created.

SHORETEL GOES WITH THE FLOW

The Portland Water District is happy with its decision to go with VoIP from ShoreTel. "We've been in production for ten months and people are still coming up and commenting positively about the ShoreTel system," said Cutrone. "We've also learned how easy it is to work around problems – we were able to keep up communications during a recent lightning storm, which we probably would not have been able to do before ShoreTel."

"Changing a phone system is a major project because it affects everybody," adds Davis. "This was one of the easiest IT projects we've ever done and people couldn't be happier—we went from contract to full implementation in just four months. That's incredible and it's all due to ShoreTel."

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