Carthage, MO Modernizes Municipal Government Communications with Unified Communications as a Service

Customer Profile

The City of Carthage, MO
- 9 buildings
- 150 employees

Solution

Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) with U.S. Cellular

Features Include
- VoIP services
- Call routing
- Auto attendants
- Caller ID
- Call bursting
- Electronic faxing
- Overhead paging
- 4 digit dialing between buildings

Carthage, Missouri is a historic, tightly-knit community of over 14,000 people. In 2018, the city government decided it was time to improve communication for (and between) the city's various municipal buildings.

With nine total buildings hosting a wide array of government services – including administration, public works, parks and recreation, police, fire and the streets department – the city's 150-plus employees needed a single connected solution to communicate efficiently across multiple groups, offices and departments.

Carthage worked with U.S. Cellular® to choose a hosted UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) solution from Crexendo. The solution provided the city with new features like overhead paging, 4 digit dialing between buildings and call bursting that helped streamline communications throughout the government. Call bursting automatically adds additional phone lines when all of your current ones are in use, preventing callers from receiving busy signals and improving customer service. The solution enables the city's IT manager to manage all these features and departments through a single access point – all while providing significant cost savings over the old system.

> " The new system cuts our phone costs in half.
> It ends up paying for itself in the first year. "
>
> Amon Henady,
> IT Manager

The Challenge

Improving city communications & lowering costs

The city was using a legacy communications system with rising costs and outdated features. As they outgrew the system, they knew change was in order, but weren't entirely sure where to begin. They knew they wanted a solution that would save them money while providing the flexibility that their outdated system lacked.

After years of struggling with its antiquated technology, the city turned to IT manager Amon Henady to solve its communications problem. "The city had been talking about upgrading for many years," Henady says. "I took it over a year and a half ago, and it became one of my big projects to work on." In December 2017, the city put out a request for bids, and just three months later, their new system was up and running.

Choosing a connected solution

Henady and his team did their due diligence before choosing a solution, receiving bids from providers offering traditional on-site and hosted solutions. Both inter- and cross-departmental functionality were major feature requirements; and with each city department's vastly differing needs, Carthage needed a flexible, scalable solution that could evolve over time.

While the city was not specifically looking for a UCaaS hosted solution, they had already established a trusted relationship with U.S. Cellular as a communications provider. They reached out to their representative for a consultation.

> " Every department has had some degree of success they feel this [UCaaS] system has accomplished. "

Photo: City of Carthage, MO

The Solution

UCaaS implementation

After a thorough vetting process, Carthage made the decision to implement a U.S. Cellular connected solution featuring Crexendo VoIP. "We were using an older system where the price kept getting higher and higher," says Henady. "The new system offered a lot of cost savings. The city approved [the Crexendo bid] as one of the best bids that came in."

Bringing Carthage into the digital age meant a total communications overhaul. Equally as important as lowering costs was the ability to custom tailor a solution to meet the city's needs. The city government invested in 73 VoIP phones dispersed among its nine buildings, upgraded from a traditional fax machine to an e-fax, installed an overhead paging system and enabled four digit dialing between buildings.

"What really hit home for us was the ability to customize," Henady explains. "It was super flexible for what we needed." By March of 2018, the UCaaS solution was fully up and running, with its modular flexibility paying immediate dividends.

"Each building had their own views on what they needed to create a better system," Henady says. The police department implemented call bursting to manage a high volume of calls. Meanwhile, the fire department upgraded from a basic traditional phone system to a solution with caller ID, call saving and the handy ability to transfer calls between buildings and offices. "Every department has had some degree of success they feel this system has accomplished," Henady notes.

Onboarding & implementation

User adoption is key to the outcome of any new technology implementation. With city employees already eager to improve their communications practices, the new solution's simple, efficient onboarding process had Carthage primed for success. A service representative configured the new solution ahead of time, then arrived on-site for testing and one-on-one training.

"They had a great onboarding process," says Henady. "Overall it went very, very smooth...it really only took a month and a half to accomplish everything from start to finish."

A highlight of the onboarding process was the ability to make changes as needed. Even a relatively small change like adjusting a ringer made the solution feel more custom. "There were some things we had to change as we went through, but nothing they couldn't accomplish for us," Henady says.

After years of anticipation, when the day came to "flip the switch," the city's diligent preparations paid off. "The phones were all finished being installed on the 27th of March," Henady recalls. "On the 28th our old phones stopped working, and the new ones started working. By the end of the day everyone was trained up and able to do basic functions. I think they all feel very comfortable now."

The Results

Organization-wide impact

Prior to implementing a UCaaS system, any attempt to streamline communications or fix problems created major upheaval, especially for lone IT manager Henady. The new solution includes an online portal with how-to videos that make diagnosing and solving issues much easier, even for non-technical personnel. "There are multiple resources available to help," Henady explains. "They have great support on the website."

On the administrative side, Henady appreciates being able to directly make updates himself. "Being an admin for the system has been simple," he says. "There's one login where I can see everything that's going on." With simplified administration, Henady can focus on what matters: making sure each department has a solution that just works. And should an issue require escalation, access to an administrator comes without an additional charge.

Though the solution was implemented recently, the city has already found new ways to scale and optimize. For example, customized auto-attendants for each city building enable staff to add new recordings as needed.

But one of the solution's most important features came standard: a unified login. Previously, the city relied on a cobbled-together communications system with multiple logins for each building and department. Utilizing one system has simplified operations and eased Henady's support burden. "It's one less server to manage, one less onsite device to be maintained," he explains. "It's all maintained by the provider."

The ultimate result? Carthage is running more smoothly than ever, and city employees are happy with the new solution – none more so than Henady. "It's been all positive," he says.

> **"**
>
> **Simplifying Support**
> I don't have to reach out to a phone guy, or any other person. I can hop into the admin portal and just change it.
>
> **"**

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