



Damascus College – Case Study by LG-Nortel systems

Challenge

Damascus College, established in 1995, has its origin in three Colleges. Sacred Heart College and St. Martin's in the Pines were owned and administered by the Sisters of Mercy. St. Paul's College was a regional school conducted by the Christian Brothers. The College provides Catholic secondary co-education for day students in Ballarat and surrounding areas on two campuses located at Ballarat East and Mt. Clear, approximately 7 kilometres apart.

Damascus College had a phone system in each campus, which had become unreliable due to their age. They were looking to upgrade these business telephone systems and replace them with one system over two campuses. Ideally, a solution that reduced the cost of operating and managing two separate systems, increased the traffic capacity between the sites and reduced the cost of operating the antiquated inter-site tie lines.

Impacts

Damascus College's concerns began to mount when their two telephone systems could not be maintained due to a lack of available parts, which caused delays in the day to day running of the campuses. The inability to add enhanced applications and features such as a centralised attendant and centralised voice mail were causing further frustrations. The two tie lines that "networked" the systems were expensive and did not provide enough capacity for the daily communications between the campuses. A more cost effective solution to reduce rising call charges between campuses, provide them with advanced applications, whilst providing greater inter site call capacity, became a top priority.

Solutions

After listening to several vendor proposals, Damascus College selected LG-Nortel Platinum Partner Connect Tel, located in Geelong Victoria, to handle the conversion. Connect Tel presented LG-Nortel's pure IP solution, the iPECS, for this dual-location application. After learning more about LG-Nortel, its products and the feature advantages of the iPECS system, Damascus College gave

Connect Tel approval to overhaul their communications network.

Damascus College wanted to be at the forefront of technology with regards to their telecommunication needs, however, they also needed to be sure that the system implemented would meet all their guidelines and that post sale support would be strong.

While their immediate needs could have been met by LG-Nortel's 'Aria' IP enabled hybrid systems it was decided a pure IP system would provide complete integration and transparency and meet the College's vision to eventually combine both campuses into one.

Damascus College had some specific requirements. They required point to point communication that exceeded their current tie line capacity, a centralised receptionist to maximise staff efficiency, to make teachers accessible via direct dialling and accountable for their own messages by introducing unified messaging. It was also desirable to better utilise their existing data microwave links for voice traffic, thus enabling staff to move between campuses with ease.

Easy administration of Moves, Adds and Changes that they could initiate themselves, as well as each user being able to make basic changes to their own extensions, such as call forwarding, speed call entries or feature buttons, was a high priority as it would free-up vital IT resources.

Damascus College proceeded with a LG-Nortel iPECS 300 system. The system configuration consisted of a centralised iPECS 300 system installed at the Mt Clear campus with 40 IP handsets, a Centralised Voice Mail providing unified messaging to all users on both campuses, an iPECS PC Attendant and web enabled network administration. The system was also connected to Telstra's ISDN20 service with direct in-dialling.

The second campus at Ballarat East was already connected for data purposes by a 4Mb Microwave link. -Systems integrator Connect Tel were able to use this existing link for voice as well, thus alleviating the need for the existing analogue voice tie lines. A further 40 IP handsets were



installed at this campus, as well as a second iPECS PC Attendant. These IP handsets simply became extensions of the iPECS 300 system installed at the Mt Clear campus, with full network transparency such as paging across both sites, centralised voice mail and centralised attendant.

Benefits

Damascus College now have a complete VoIP solution that has enabled them to integrate their two campuses. The requirement and expense of buying and maintaining two systems has been eliminated. Integrating their voice and data communications between campuses over one single link has increased call capacity between sites and saved money by eliminating the need for old and expensive tie lines, as well as the cost of calls overflowing via the public network when these tie lines were busy.

Centralised voice mail has reduced their capital equipment outlay by rendering the need to purchase a second voice mail system redundant. It has increased productivity and efficiency - voice mails are now answered promptly as teachers are either notified by e-mail or can retrieve their voice mail from any extension.

Every teacher also now has a direct in-dial thus eliminating unnecessary call handling by the attendant. The employment of the 4Mb link has eliminated congestion and the utilization of uniform 4-digit numbering presents the two sites as one system.

Installing an iPECS PC Attendant at each site has enabled Damascus College to operate with a centralised attendant from either site. If one attendant is not available then all calls go to the other site. However the need for duplicated administration infrastructure has been eliminated

Expensive third party maintenance of Moves, Adds and Changes has also been eliminated by the use of iPECS' smart web administration tool. The IT department now manages these changes over the LAN or Web thus

controlling the placement of handsets around the two campuses, and parameters such as class of service or feature assignment of each handset.

Damascus College is already looking at other benefits iPECS may bring to them in the future, such as WiFi handsets or Softphone for teachers laptops, further mobilising their workforce by providing their own extension and freedom to move around the campuses.

Improved call handling has resulted in enhanced service levels, increased employee productivity and improved communication between the two campuses. The choice of an iPECS pure-IP system from LG-Nortel provides Damascus College with a leading-edge communications platform, which will continue to evolve as the world of convergence, evolves.

“Damascus College created a challenge for LG Nortel and their partners Connect Tel, when we awarded them the contract for our new telephone system. Their challenge was to install a telephone system, which would create a virtual one-campus school, out of a previously poorly connected two-campus school. The outcome has far exceeded our expectations. The nature of our installation meant that there would be problems and in every case both LG Nortel and Connect Tel have shown a willingness to address the issues quickly and efficiently. Six months down the track our staff now take for granted features and facilities that not that long ago seemed an impossibility”

Stephen Bigarelli Business Manager
Damascus College, Ballarat