

Quest STRATEGIC ADVISOR

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Quest | CASE STUDY

Partnering for functionality, flexibility, and low TCO

Imagine working with a technology partner who helps you discover ways to get the functionality you want with a tight budget — a technology partner who considers the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of the system you're installing and is flexible and capable enough to train your staff to shoulder some of the system support over time.

According to Ira Rosenthal, CIO of the Department of Information Technology for the County of Solano, California, that's exactly what Quest delivered, and has kept on delivering over more than five years of partnership.



Understanding a customer's environment

Quest's first engagement with the County was an upgrade to its network in preparation for implementing a new statewide human services application. Although it was just before he joined the County, Ira recalls being told, "Quest's engineering and installation assistance was critical to getting us where we needed to be."

Still, he didn't really know the company personally, so when the decision was made to deploy Voice Over IP (VoIP) at the County's major new administration center building, Ira sought bids from a number

of vendors. Many vendors really do not understand, or care to understand, the environment of their customers — for them, it's just a generic technology project. But not Quest.

Delivering functionality creatively

Technical acumen wasn't the only reason Ira selected Quest, however.

"Quest not only had the most competitive bid, they also had the most creative bid response," explains Ira. "We simply didn't have as much money available for what we needed to accomplish as we should have, and Quest came back with a number of ways to deliver the functionality

COUNTY OF SOLANO, CALIFORNIA (Cont. on p. 2)

THE BOTTOM LINE

The County of Solano wanted VoIP. What it got was that and more: a partner with the expertise, ability to think creatively about budgets, and concern about TCO.

of firms. After a thorough evaluation of the RFPs, he chose Quest.

"Quest is very well qualified in both VoIP and in general networking technology," he reports. "They're very knowledgeable about the way the public phone system works — like how best to interface to the public network and how to smoothly bring together old and new telecommunications technologies.

"And their experience helping other organizations implement these systems means they know how to leverage the technology for the most productivity gain.

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COUNTY OF SOLANO, CALIFORNIA (Cont. from p. 1)

we needed for a price we could afford."

The VoIP project took some six months from initial meeting to being fully operational. Quest performed the initial user needs assessments — including working with each department to identify their requirements while keeping them within the operational boundaries the IT group was willing to support. Quest also did the engineering, interfacing with the local

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— Ira Rosenthal

phone company, programming, implementation, and training end users.

The final — and one of the most essential — pieces provided by Quest was the training of the telecommunications staff for future system maintenance. Quest adjusted the level of support services over the last four years to match the skill sets of County IT staff, enabling them to do as much of the service as is cost-effective for them while still keeping their system operational.

Enthusiasm for sharing ideas and advice

"Quest really understands what it takes to operate these systems after they've been installed," notes Ira. "Quest looks at optimizing the whole package — what it takes to operate

FROM TIM BURKE...

Bridging the voice-data gap

The appeal of an integrated, unified messaging system and other operational efficiencies has made VoIP hot. To be sure, there are advantages, but there are also hidden pitfalls.

The first thing to remember is that VoIP is a data application running over your existing network, so it needs bandwidth and ongoing support. Without these, the performance of your phone systems and every one of your business applications will be affected. Don't forget: a downed network means no applications and no voice communications.

And while VoIP is a data application, its success depends heavily on how well you understand and manage traditional voice providers — the phone companies. Even many seasoned IT people don't understand telecommunications requirements. Conversely, you can't expect the phone company to help determine network readiness — data networks are not *their* business.

Finally, before you buy from one of the many vendors ready to sell you VoIP — or, more likely, some piece of VoIP — make sure that vendor can analyze and support your complete voice-data implementation — including your phone services. You can't afford a VoIP vendor who tells you that voice is not *their* business.

Regardless of the nature of your business, your first step into VoIP requires expertise in cost-effectively integrating the disparate worlds of voice and data.



after the fact. You get a real TCO picture from these folks."

Today, Quest is helping the County of Solano operate more than 900 phones, including an automated/interactive voice response system that enables County residents to get accurate tax information and voting locations without human intervention. The County is also using Quest's services to introduce additional applications based on the VoIP system — a VoIP-based call center for the Health and Social Services department which will enable the man-

agement of client cases from the customer service center.

"The things that keep me coming back to Quest are their responsiveness, their knowledge of the technology, and their creativity and willingness to work through issues with us," says Ira. "We get much more than cookie-cutter solutions from them. What's most important for us, however, is the relationship. It's very surprising to me, this enthusiasm for sharing ideas and advice — Quest really does go out of the way to support customers."

Quest's VoIP Services:

Vendor-neutral expertise focused on your objectives

Too often, companies implement Voice Over IP (VoIP) without knowing the limitations of their hardware and network environment. Often they also lack understanding of the requirements for such additional functionalities as integration with other voicemail systems, phone-to-phone intercom, music-on-hold, conferencing, call queuing, and so on. What's more, VoIP systems must be made secure against tampering and malicious attacks. Thus planning is critical.

Most organizations have neither the time nor the staff expertise to determine their VoIP requirements. So VoIP ends up costing more than it should, since troubleshooting a poorly implemented system is expensive.

Beginning with a VoIP Needs Assessment

Quest has extensive experience installing and supporting VoIP installations. Because we're vendor-neutral, we can focus on finding the right combination of equipment, services, and benefits to meet your business objectives.

We begin by conducting an extensive VoIP Needs Assessment that examines

- Hardware, including routers, switches, cable, etc.,
- Fault tolerance, load,
- Inbound and outbound calling,
- PBX functionality, including conferencing, transferring, emergency (911), and hold,
- Need for additional functionality (integration with other voicemail systems, conferencing, call queuing, phone-to-phone intercom, music-on-hold, etc.).

Faster VoIP implementation for less

Using the Needs Assessment, Quest helps you plan your VoIP implementation to address challenges that are moot when using a traditional PBX phone system – new locations, forwarding calls, on-hold capabilities, paging, transferring calls. Should growth or acquisition leave you with more than one system, Quest can help you deal with

the productivity issues and additional training costs you may encounter.

We can also ensure that your VoIP system is secure, preventing infiltration, interception of data, or eavesdropping. Quest can help you with such key security considerations as data encryption, user security policies, quality of service (QoS), firewalls, packet filters, and end-to-end security.

Quest's VoIP experience and expertise means your implementation will get done faster, cost you less, cause you fewer problems, and meet your business objectives.

DID-YOU-KNOW?

Why VoIP security matters

Voice Over IP (VoIP) attacks will increase by 50 percent in 2008, says security vendor McAfee. That's after the number of VoIP attacks jumped 100 percent in 2007 over 2006.

This comes on the heels of a proof-of-concept program showing that it's easy to eavesdrop on company VoIP-based phone calls. Dubbed SIPTap, the software monitors multiple VoIP call streams and records them as .wav files. Infecting just a single PC in a corporate network with a Trojan virus is all it takes, though the hack would work at the ISP level as well.

Developed by UK VoIP expert Peter Cox, SIPTap uses SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) identity information to index 'IP-tapped' calls by caller as well as by recipient and by date. The program ran from August to November of 2007 on a test network, proving that recording all VoIP calls has become trivially easy on unprotected systems that lack VoIP call encryption.

What's the solution?

Cox suggests that those implementing VoIP systems apply the same rigor to the effort that they would apply to building and securing a website.

Coming in the next issue of *Quest Strategic Advisor*:

Case Study of Redwood Credit Union

What's New...

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Voice Over IP is going mobile:

- Mobile VoIP is seen as a means to enhance productivity more than to cut costs, according to an Aberdeen Group study. Organizations deemed best-in-class achieve a 49-percent return on their investment – nearly three times more than other organizations – and annually save \$154 per user. http://www.aberdeen.com/summary/report/benchmark/RA_mVoIP_APW_BS_3900.asp
- Research firm Disruptive Analysis predicts that by 2012 there will be more than 250 million users of VoIP on third-generation-technology networks. <http://www.disruptive-analysis.com/voipo3g.htm>
- Mobile VoIP will gain plenty of momentum in 2008 from Google's Android, a new open-source mobile platform. Google has not only invited developers to build Android applications, it will also be partnering with selected wireless carriers. <http://businessvoip.tmcnet.com/topics/trends/articles/16550-whats-store-voip-2008.htm>
- Research firm IDC believes that mobile VoIP will push mobile network operators to open their networks to a wide range of devices, not just those they sell themselves. Verizon and AT&T have already begun moving toward such openness. <http://www.networkworld.com/news/2007/120607-mobile-internet-2008.html?fsrc=netflash-rss>
- M/C Venture Partners, a venture capital firm, has stated (in its annual Top 10 Trends list) that "Mobile broadband is becoming the medium to bridge the digital divide worldwide ... Quite simply, mobile broadband will democratize communications." <http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/-mobile-internet-services-will-dominate-news-2008-according-2007/12/17/3168275.htm>

IN THE MEDIA ROOM

Visit <http://www.questsys.com/media.html> for:

VIDEOS

Who We Are: Colleagues describe achieving business systems success with Quest's help.

Data Security Video: Hear direct from the FBI, security experts and your peers about the in-depth issues, and how Quest can help protect your company.

HCIN video: Learn how Quest used VoIP and Video Technology to help Health Care Interpreter Network (HCIN) design a workable language interpretation solution that complies with regulations, improves patient care, and increases revenues.

Business Continuity Planning/Disaster Recovery: More than 25 percent of businesses damaged never recover from natural and/or man-made disasters. Ensure your future.

Video overview of our Infrastructure Services: Wireless, Broadband, Fiber-optics, Fiber Splicing, Infrastructure Cabling and more.

PODCASTS

QUEST ON THE RADIO: Download the podcast on Quest's Threat Review Process.

PCI Compliance podcast: Join (Co-Hosts) Scott Draughon (My Technology Lawyer) and Oliver Rist (InfoWorld) as they interview Mike Dillon (Quest CTO) and Jon Bolden (Quest Director of Professional Services) about PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance.

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Publisher: Tim Burke

Editor: Barbara Klide

Contact the editor at barbara_klide@questsys.com

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"As long as we keep the computers turned off, we'll be completely hacker proof."