



When United Utilities chose a TeleWare system to replace its ageing voicemail system, managers were confident they were putting in place the foundations which would allow them to cost-effectively introduce a range of new voice applications into the future in order to support the evolving needs of a dynamically changing organisation.

United Utilities has a simply stated vision: To be an outstanding provider of services that make life better.

With operations stretching across the UK and around the globe, United Utilities has a turnover exceeding £1.2 billion and provides essential services for millions of people every day.

Voicemail Replacement

A number of prospective suppliers had responded to a formal tendering process yet, according to Paul Foode , Telecommunications Manager within United Utilities Facilities and Property Services , TeleWare scored significantly higher than other contenders, both technically and in terms of value for money.

“What particularly impressed us about the TeleWare solution was the very broad range of applications available”, explained Paul . “We will be able to add additional users and further applications as internal demand for these advanced

United Utilities:

- Supply water and wastewater services to nearly 3 million customers in the North West of England
- Distribute electricity to more than 2 million customers in the North West
- Manage water and wastewater treatment assets in the UK and internationally
- Develop and operate renewable energy generation projects
- Provide multi-utility connection services across the UK
- Handle 360 million minutes of telephone calls each month
- Provide facilities and property services to over 2 million square feet of offices and depots
- Service 11 million customers - 1 in 5 of the UK population

services increases throughout our business. We liked the idea of a single scalable platform which will support all our users and voice applications since this will be much easier and more cost-effective to manage and administer than, say, one system for voicemail, another for call distribution, another for call recording, conferencing, and so on.”

Smooth Migration Was Key

Most voicemail users at United Utilities were on a legacy system that was no-longer supported by the manufacturer under its maintenance contract. This provided the impetus for change and enabled further developments in the company’s voice network to be considered. A limited number of staff were using a different voicemail system and the plan was to move all voicemail users onto the one common TeleWare platform but to allow staff to retain their existing telephone numbers in order to minimise any disruption and inconvenience. A concern had been that the two existing systems used different numbering schemes for mailbox addresses – one system used 4 digit addresses whilst the other used 5 digit addresses. TeleWare was able to solve this problem by treating a user’s old 4 or 5 digit mailbox address as a virtual address and by using address translation tables to determine the real mailbox address on the new system.

The initial system configuration supplied by TeleWare was capable of supporting up to 3,000 voicemail users. Longer term, Paul Foode, Telecommunications Manager at United Utilities, anticipates the demand for voicemail services from staff could increase to 10,000 users. The scaleable architecture of the TeleWare solution was therefore an important factor when selecting the new system.

Implementation and User Training

Prior to installation, all voicemail users were offered familiarisation courses on the new system by TeleWare’s professional training staff. More in-depth ‘super-user’ training was also provided for nominated staff within each department such that these people would be able to provide further assistance to their colleagues if required. Training was supplemented with user documentation that was published on the United Utilities intranet.

Despite the fact that the customer opted for a ‘big bang’ approach, moving all 2,000+ current voicemail users across to the new system over one weekend, careful planning, implementation and training meant that the transition went smoothly. Although the TeleWare VoiceMail application has a much richer set of features, the basic menu structure is, in fact, not too dissimilar to that of the legacy system being replaced so most users soon adapted to the change.

Supporting Changing Workstyles

United Utilities has noted a change in culture within some areas of the business with a growth in flexible working. Increasingly, staff were finding it more productive to work from home, perhaps one day a week, with less time wasted in travelling, less stress, fewer interruptions and distractions. Yet these people were demanding the same corporate communications services as they have come to expect within the office environment.

TeleWare Intelligent Telephony Services (ITS) provides personal numbering and intelligent call handling services to support mobility, home working, hot-desking and location independent working environments. United Utilities was aware that TeleWare ITS had been successfully deployed by many medium and large corporate organisations to support flexible working for many tens of thousands of staff.

With ITS, staff are always contactable via the same telephone number, their Personal Number, irrespective of their current work location so there is no need to disclose mobile or home telephone numbers, for example. If an ITS user is unavailable, busy on another call or doesn’t answer within a set time, calls can be passed to their nominated alternative or team member with voicemail being used only as a last resort. ITS integrates easily with TeleWare



VoiceMail and FaxMail services. Messages can be retrieved and managed conveniently from any location using a variety of devices – telephone extension, external or mobile phone, or any PC, PDA or other computer device via a browser using the TeleWare WebDesk application.

The initial system configuration at United Utilities allowed these additional services to be evaluated by a limited user population in order for managers to determine the best deployment strategy based on benefits to the organisation – enhanced customer service, greater staff effectiveness and reduced overhead costs.

Mixed Network Support

Although the United Utilities voice network comprises primarily PBXs of one type, the ability of the TeleWare platform to support all major switches via a range of standard protocols such as DPNSS, QSIG and Q.931 was another factor in United Utilities' choice of supplier. TeleWare was also able to provide many examples of existing customer installations supporting mixed vendor networks.

Migration to VoIP (Voice over IP)

Like most organisations, United Utilities expects to move to a single converged IP network for all voice and data traffic at some stage and another key requirement of the new voice services platform was that it should support this migration.

Paul Foode explains, "We were very impressed with the work already done by TeleWare in this area and some of the new developments they are currently working on which they allowed us to see. TeleWare has very much maintained its open system philosophy into the VoIP arena. I'm confident that, whatever decisions we make in the future as regards IP telephony suppliers, our TeleWare platform will allow us interoperability across our existing voice network and any future converged voice/data networks making the migration and transition as smooth as possible. At the same time, we will be able to provide a common set of TeleWare applications to our users throughout United Utilities, regardless of which network infrastructure they are on."

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