

# Here's how I reduced costs by using Unified Communications technology

**Stuart Williams** is the managing director at **Active Building Maintenance Ltd**, a provider of plumbing and electrical services in the Kendal area, which employs 10 staff. The company has an office in Kendal town centre and 3 remote home working offices which are linked on the same computer and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system. Williams believes the VoIP installation has already paid for itself and saved the company additional money. The ability for his staff to access their work schedules from home or their mobile phones has reduced the requirement for staff to travel to the office saving on travel expenses and allowing more time on-site providing revenue generating services.

## What I did

### Choose a supplier

"In 2008, we opened our new office and wanted to install a computer and telephone system. We put the contract out to tender and one firm suggested Unified Communications technology which integrated all our communications requirements into one device, we decided this was our best option.

"We like to be at the forefront of technology but don't want something so complicated that we needed to employ an in house specialist. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology was proposed as the telephony solution due to its flexibility and cost cutting capability. We liked

the back office server technology as it enabled us to synchronise our email using laptops, desktops and mobiles. A great advantage provided by the server technology was the ability to connect our home offices to the office network and company data. We could keep the installation costs down by using one broadband circuit to provide the 6 DDI telephone lines we wanted as well as providing a data connection. The broadband circuit provides Quality of Service (QoS) for the voice calls and so the quality of the line is as good as a standard analogue line. Best of all there are no recurring rental fees except for the broadband connection

which we would be paying for anyway and the calls are 1p per minute”

### **Buy the right equipment**

“When it came to installation, all we needed to do was liaise with one supplier who provided everything we needed to start working, broadband to furniture. Using a one-stop-shop saved us time and money not having to deal with a multitude of suppliers. We estimate this saved us a week of research time and over £3500 pounds in recurring yearly line rental costs and setup charges. The equipment itself has a minimal cost as a computer server loaded with software was quoted at £2999 from various suppliers. We paid £2999 for the hardware and effectively got a free telephone system included. The specialist handsets to convert voice data into computer data cost £180, with the total cost of installation coming in around £4,000.

“I know it sounds expensive to a small business, but the system gives us a great deal of flexibility and has already paid for itself from the moment we purchased it.

“We used to pay over £700 per quarter for our 6 DDI lines, but this has been reduced by 50% and we get our broadband included. We no longer pay BT’s call setup charges saving nearly 90% on our call charges which for us has

reduced our monthly call costs from £180 to about £25.”

### **Present the right image**

“I think VoIP helps present a professional image to the customer. We have three different businesses operating from the one office. When people ring they get routed through to the correct company and the phone is answered professionally by our single admin person for that company. We are able to have dedicated fax lines for each of our businesses which would have been wasteful and expensive had we not used Unified Communications technology. The telephone system has many sophisticated features such as call queuing and voice mail which means we never miss a call even if only one person is in the office. It also means our customers never get an engaged tone. All of our calls between the office and home sites are free and those to external people cost us a fraction of standard phone-service provider prices. You can ring people who don’t have VoIP and the quality of the line remains as good.”