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City Shapes CLEC by the SeaShore

Daytona Beach goes from 17 different phone systems to one; gains uniform, sophisticated calling features.

By Ellen Muraskin

03/04/2002, 6:42 PM ET

The premises:
City of Daytona Beach, FL

The pieces:

- Nortel Networks Meridian with ITG IP

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trunk card

- Nortel Remote Office 9150s
- Business Policy Switch 2000
- Passport 8600 Routing Switch
- Call Pilot Unified Messaging
- Liaison ASR-enabled auto attendant
- Gigabit Ethernet fiber WAN
- Frame relay and BRI ISDN circuits

The payback:

\$240,000 the first year in maintenance and toll savings.

The Plot:

The city of Daytona Beach, FL, had a mixed bag of telephony solutions throughout its municipal agencies. Spanning 43 buildings, Daytona's city government encompassed 17 different, separately billed Centrex accounts plus key systems from various makers; the whole maintained by a collection of vendors. This was perhaps acceptable for a town its size - 68,000 - but not for the site of Daytona 500, Bike Week, Black College Reunion, and Spring Break. These events bump up the population to over a million, severely straining the communications infrastructure.

Daytona's MIS department decided to centralize its phone service, its phone bills, and make its calling features uniform; they also needed something scalable. They wound up with three proposals from three separate Nortel (Brampton, Ontario, Canada - 905-863-0000, <http://www.nortelnetworks.com/>) VARs. Daytona chose the solution that centered on a converged voice-and-data WAN, switched and gatewayed by two large Nortel PBXes - a Meridian 61C at city hall, with 300 to 400 extensions on premise, and a mirrored 61C at police HQ. These provide network-wide sophisticated calling features and centralized dial tone and billing. Smaller IP-enabled Meridian Option 11s, with T1s, are installed at the public works department and the water/sewage department.

Both 61Cs are equipped with IP gateway cards, and use the city's existing WAN to ship VoIP to the fire department, parks and recreation, the Peabody Auditorium, the water treatment plant, and other sites. Fourteen remote sites are equipped with Nortel Remote Office 9150s, which packetize voice, perform local-extension

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switching, and convey all the Meridian calling features and dial tone for up to eight simultaneous calls over one ISDN B channel, using G.729 compression. A Nortel Business Policy Switch 2000 at these sites makes sure that voice traffic gets priority over data. Of 43 buildings, 23 are now using VoIP; all draw switching and call features from the 61C Meridians.

Voice and data run over Daytona's own 1 GB fiber-optic backbone, from 61C via Ethernet to a Nortel Passport 8600 switch. "We are our own CLEC," says Gene McWilliams, Daytona Beach's MIS manager, information services, and designer of the network. Where the fiber isn't buried, they use frame-relay links leased from Bell South, with an ARN router terminating a data T1 between Passport and LEC.

City employees in one- or two-person offices have a small, one-port version of the 9150 - a 9110 - which works across an ISDN or other broadband connection. "All city employees have the same functionality, same voicemail, whether at city hall or in a one-person office," says McWilliams.

If QoS won't support voice, a 9150 fails over to a PSTN line on a B-channel. The single-port VoIP gateway fails over to an analog line.

The new network was installed in four months. MIS claims to have saved \$240,000 over the first twelve months in connection fees, Centrex, and maintenance. McWilliams: "I sent two of my people to Nortel school for a month and they maintain it. When we had Merlins, Spirits, Rolms, and others, we had to maintain spare parts for each system. With the Meridians, the same line cards fit in 61Cs and 11Cs and remotes; I keep a 9150 spare and I can react anywhere."

The city-wide system also makes shared use of Nortel's Call Pilot UM server, hanging off the city hall Meridian, and a Liaison speech-recognizing auto attendant/call router from Locus Dialog (Montreal, Quebec, Canada - 514-954-3804, <http://www.locusdialog.com/>). "We put all our menus on that," says McWilliams. A Nortel conference bridge allows them to do their own audioconferencing, another service they intend to sell to area businesses.

Uniformity of calling features, four-digit dialing and self-maintenance are nice, but how does this converged network help Daytona's bursty population problem? Remember last month's Muraskin File, which involved an architectural firm's broadband hookups to construction-site trailers? McWilliams' trailers are police mobile command centers; their

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