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NZ's largest laundry company cleans up communications

A nationwide rollout of a Microsoft Enterprise Voice solution has improved AlSCO's collaboration and significantly reduced their communications costs.

SUMMARY

Operating in New Zealand for over 110 years with a nationwide network of over 20 branches, AlSCO have a clear understanding of how to run an efficient and sustainable services business. Offering a range of products such as uniform hire, managed garment systems, linen hire, floor care, hygiene systems and first aid supplies, AlSCO services the pharmaceutical, food and industrial industries.

An impending head office move, led AlSCO to review their nationwide communications strategy. Lexel worked alongside AlSCO to help define their communications requirements across their entire business with goals to enable users to collaborate more effectively and reduce the overall cost of ownership of communications.

Lexel successfully implemented a Microsoft Skype for Business solution that meets the customers needs today and provides room for future growth.

THE CHALLENGE

AlSCO faced two challenges pertaining to their current phone solution. Firstly, there was an impending move for their New Zealand head office and secondly, over time, disparate PABX solutions had been deployed to the branches, that were difficult to manage and maintain.

AlSCO saw these challenges as an opportunity to rethink their entire communications strategy and see what other improvements could be made to benefit their business.

While Microsoft Skype for Business (previously called Microsoft Lync) had been deployed to provide Presence

and Instant Messaging; this had been on a small scale and only rolled out to a few selected users.

Initially, there were no specific plans for a countrywide strategy, however as the true potential of Microsoft Skype for Business became apparent, reviewing the strategy for the other 20 branches around New Zealand made sense.

As the branch managers owned the responsibility of the local phone system there was no set standard across the business and the branches contained a mix of older traditional PABX solutions, utilising traditional telco connections. As a result of these disparate systems it had been difficult to create a corporate standard for managing communication across all sites. There was also substantial cost in trying to manage and maintain these environments. The challenge initially was showing these branches the value of change, as typically the user's requirements were to simply make a phone call.

In addition, the corporate environment had been without resiliency for any of the phone systems, as it had proven to be uneconomical.

"Our old systems were holding us back, but with Skype for Business, we've improved our traditional communications, as well as allowing extensive use of video conferencing and collaboration – a big change for a very conservative company. And as a bonus, we're now spending substantially less on inter-branch air travel!" - Daniel Smith, National Projects Manager, AlSCO NZ.



LEXEL'S SOLUTION

Lexel deployed the Enterprise Voice component of Skype for Business for AlSCO's head office. The current PABX was retired and all calls were diverted to the Microsoft Skype for Business platform. Lexel's deployment process allowed for user acceptance testing to be completed well prior to the move. This meant one less significant task to worry about on move day. Users also had a new level of comfort provided by the new system that enabled them to either work remotely from home, via their smartphones or easily divert calls if necessary. This removed the risk of missing potentially important calls around move day.

Based on the ease at which this migration occurred and the communication benefits that were being enjoyed by AlSCO's employees, it became clear that a country wide deployment of a Skype for Business solution would be of great benefit to the company.

Lexel hosted a workshop with key AlSCO staff and clearly defined the deliverables required by the greater business. From this session a detailed strategy was created and agreed upon and a project was initiated. The end result is a Microsoft Unified Communication platform meeting today's needs while giving the business room to grow from a technology perspective.

BENEFITS

Some of the key benefits include a consolidation of phone systems across the country while creating standardisation for the group. This consolidation created significant savings by reducing the number of PABX's requiring maintenance. The consolidation also helped to reduce ongoing monthly telco costs, as the business shifted these services to a SIP provider. The solution also provided significant cost savings by reducing duplication in the company's phone services. Duplication has been replaced by a fault tolerance solution nationwide.

As a business, AlSCO has two primary communication capabilities and requirements:

- Those with limited external communication needs.
- Those requiring the latest in enterprise class communications.

Lexel is a New Zealand owned provider of ICT services and solutions to business. We focus on maximising business performance by using industry leading expertise and solutions to streamline IT infrastructure. Twenty seven years in the IT business, Lexel is a known and trusted partner.

We specialise in providing solution consulting, infrastructure design, implementation, project management, outsourcing, support services and procurement. To allow us to deliver this wide range of services, Lexel Systems has partnered with the main technology providers in New Zealand and we have secured the highest level of certifications possible with each of these partners.

The deployed solution provided everything from a simple phone handset all the way up to an enterprise solution for video and collaboration. Being able to tailor user requirements has meant that unnecessary licenses costs were avoided, with the ability to upgrade in the future if required. Lexel was able to utilise Office 365 licenses that had been acquired under a Microsoft Enterprise agreement at a group level, therefore no additional user licenses needed to be purchased. This added further value to the AlSCO's initial investment.



KEY BENEFITS

- Improved traditional communications
- Convenience of headsets
- Choice of devices to communicate with
- Significant reduction in air travel costs
- Significantly improved collaboration

As Federation is now in place with other regions, video conferences with shared content is now the norm. Staff can also join these meetings from anywhere with an internet connection. Because all users in all branches are part of the same organisation, one by-product of the project is AlSCO now have a consolidated contact index, managed through Active Directory.

"It was important to us that any communications system was highly flexible, centrally controllable and secure, supported a range of user types, and allowed significant hardware choice for our end users. Through a nationwide deployment of Skype for Business, Lexel have achieved those aims" - Daniel Smith, National Projects Manager, AlSCO NZ.