



VOIP solution cuts through Underwood's telephone complexity



Industry

Food production

Key challenges

- Complex telephony estate spread across multiple sites with different providers
- Upcoming End of Support deadline for existing ISDN system
- Connectivity upgrade at Chesterfield site

Solution

- Gamma Horizon VOIP solution
- Installation of a new high-performance leased line
- Project management to ensure seamless switchover

Business benefits

- Easier administration with a single provider
- Simple system avoided unwanted disruption

Gamma Horizon simplifies multi-site telephony management

Underwood Meat Company are one of the UK's largest independent catering butchers. Following a period of expansion and acquisition, the business now operates across multiple sites, and inherited a complicated IT estate as a result.

This included an array of different telephone solutions, complicating the administration and management of the business' telephony infrastructure. Faced with the need to implement a new leased line for a major site, and with an impending ISDN End of Support deadline approaching, IT support provider Highlander was tasked with proposing an alternative solution that could ease the administration burden and deliver important new functionality without major upheaval.

Company overview

Underwood Meat Company has established itself as one of the UK's most highly regarded catering suppliers, delivering quality butchered products to UK businesses for almost 50 years.

The challenge

With a long heritage in butchered catering supply, Underwood Meat Company has more recently expanded to operate across a number of different sites throughout the UK. However, while this expansion has helped to grow the business, it also resulted in multiple IT systems, including a complicated network of telephony solutions provisioned from multiple suppliers.

"We're a multi-site business," commented Kevin Jones, Finance Director. "A lot of the sites we've either bought, leased, or inherited as part of a business acquisition. As a result, we've ended up adopting different telephone solutions with each."

Juggling multiple solutions presented unwanted administrative headaches, with different configurations for each platform, as well as complicated billing due to the need to work with multiple providers.



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Kevin Jones, Finance Director

One of these systems was an ISDN-based Avaya platform operating at Underwood's Head Office, a solution which was already managed by Highlander, the incumbent IT support provider for nearly 10 years.

Aware of the complicated nature of their existing telephony estate across multiple sites, an impending End of Support deadline for the ISDN solution brought the situation to a head. "We always knew we had this challenge," Jones remarked. "Highlander had been reiterating the need to address the issue with our ISDN solution for some time, so considering this and the mix and match solutions at our other sites, we decided to make a change."

At the same time, Underwood was also keen to replace the existing leased line to improve the connectivity at its Chesterfield site, and Highlander was tasked with finding a solution to both challenges.

The solution

As Underwood's established IT provider for several years, Highlander was well-placed not only to review the existing position, but identify and implement a modern, resilient solution to overcome the obstacles they faced.

After an initial period of assessment and consultation, Highlander recommended that a Voice Over IP (VOIP) solution from Gamma Horizon would be the best fit, and engaged them to help outline a proposal. This included a complete migration to the cloud-based platform as part of a staged implementation across every site, as well as the refresh of the existing handsets for every user.

The solution included the leased line upgrade for the Chesterfield site, and with that the consolidation of a previously overcomplicated estate into a single unified solution. "We wanted something that allowed us to rationalise our existing solutions and move away from existing contracts while hopefully saving some money too," Jones remarked. "It felt like the ideal solution, and the commercials worked for us."

With the proposal confirmed, Highlander, with assistance from Gamma, undertook a staged rollout of the solution. This included the implementation of a high-performance leased line for the Chesterfield site, as well as an initial rollout of the VOIP solution at Underwood's Rotherham Head Office where the existing Avaya solution was set for End of Support. One significant obstacle was identifying the various telephone numbers currently active with multiple suppliers, as well as contacting each provider to liaise over number porting ahead of the migration. "It was a challenge with so many in use, especially at our Rotherham site," commented Katherine Skingle, Sales and Marketing Manager. "There were a lot of numbers with different suppliers that we didn't even know existed."



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"Highlander and Gamma were able to provide us with an export of the numbers we were currently using to give us some visibility," Skingle added. "They also provided us with the letter of authorisation we needed to share with each provider to allow us to make a switch."

With numbers correctly identified, and the required leased line in place, Highlander and Gamma undertook a full rollout across each site in turn, with deployment completed in one day at each location, followed by a second day of additional training. This was despite an issue with a number of physical ports at the Godalming site, which required some impromptu re-cabling work to ensure the appropriate connections were in place.

"Overall the implementation was very smooth," commented Jones. "The downtime was minimal, and that was only on a user-by-user basis for around 10-15 minutes. It was good to get the system in place quickly so we could continue business as usual."

Business results and benefits

Hassle-free admin

A unified solution delivered by a single provider, Underwood now enjoys much simpler administration of its telephony infrastructure, with one bill covering every single site. "Moving to a single provider makes a big difference commercially," Jones remarked. "Having a single bill for every site makes things so much easier."

Simple communication

"Being able to pick up the phone and call another site without dialling an external line is brilliant," commented Skingle.

"We were looking for an improved system that could deliver all of the basic functionality without major upheaval for the team, so it's great that we've been able to achieve that and enjoy better commercials," added Jones.

Future-proof platform

Having avoided the challenges of End of Support for its existing Avaya solution, Underwood's business telephony is now built on a future-proof, flexible platform that's ready to deliver new functionality. "It's great to have a system that can offer everything we needed, and now we're keen to explore what other features we can access," Skingle stated.



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Specialist solutions



Infrastructure



Protection



Cloud



ERP



Workspace



Services

Working with Highlander



"We tasked Highlander with finding a solution for us, and it was reassuring to work with a business we trusted. Both Highlander and Gamma were very helpful throughout, and what they've recommended has been a real success." Kevin Jones, Finance Director.



Email us at hello@highlanderuk.com or call us today on **+44(0)114 292 3800**. Visit www.highlanderuk.com
Highlander Computing Solutions, Systems House, Shepcote Office Village, 333 Shepcote Lane, Sheffield, S9 1TG