Piccones Group

Retailer Piccones Group reduces costs and streamlines operations with unified communications

Calibre One consolidates telephony and brings together diversified operations for leading Cairns retailer

Piccones Group is a retail and property management group based in the far north Queensland city of Cairns. The company employs more than 300 local staff and has a strong community focus, supporting various local associations and sporting groups. Piccones owns two SUPA IGA supermarkets, Piccones Shopping Village and the historic Hambledon Hotel. The two IGA stores in the Cairns suburbs of Edmonton and Manoora are the largest retail format of the chain and both stock the full range

of the national chain's products. In addition to these, Piccones also operates a number of retail and hospitality outlets in the Piccones Shopping Village.

A progressive business with regards to its adoption and use of technology, Piccones was hampered by an ageing and ineffective communications infrastructure. Each of its three main sites were running different legacy phone systems that were expensive to operate and difficult to maintain. Coding of the phone systems was so locked down that even basic changes of configuration (such as auto attendant updates) required an expensive on-site support call. Additionally, each Piccones location had its own leased lines, meaning every call between sites was considered external thus contributing to higher ongoing costs.

Challenge:

To consolidate three disparate phone systems across three sites into a single telephony system utilising available telecommunications infrastructure.

Solution:

Re-engineer and provision: a new wide and local area networking infrastructure; Internet connectivity; ShoreTel Connect onsite Unified Communications (UC) solution; and provide a 24x7 helpdesk.

Benefits:

- Savings of more than $25,000 per annum on line rental and call costs
- Reduction in ongoing telephony maintenance and support costs
- Better communications and collaboration across all sites
- Improvements in staff satisfaction and customer service experience
- Ability to make telephony changes quickly in response to business needs

As a high volume retail business, the Piccones brand relies heavily on its phones – both for handling consumer enquiries and keeping in touch with suppliers and staff. When Piccones went to market for a new communications solution, it had a very clear vision of what was required.

"Ultimately, we needed a solution that helps us sell products to our customers. We wanted one giant phone system for all our locations, so we could make internal calls throughout," said Kalem Angel, CIO, Piccones Group. "We also needed a phone system that was easy to manage; where we would be able to make most of the configuration changes ourselves."

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Kalem Angel
CIO
Piccones Group

Professional and Responsive

The first proposals Piccones received for a new telecommunications solution were, according to Angel, "all or nothing packages" with "ludicrous" ongoing monthly costs. Following an introduction from Piccones' Telstra specialist, Calibre One was able propose a solution that satisfied all requirements yet was both cost-effective and realistic.

"Calibre One was professional to deal with, listened to our needs and were not at all pushy," said Angel. "We didn't need video conferencing and we didn't want to be locked into long-term contracts. Also, with the timing of the NBN deployment to our region being uncertain, we needed a solution that would work with both current and future broadband services."

Greater Autonomy

Using the web-based management portal on the new ShoreTel (now Mitel) solution, Piccones is now able to complete most telephony administration itself, including moves, adds, changes and deletions, setting up conference calls and new or updated auto attendant functions. This capability has saved Piccones ongoing fees and programming charges but, more importantly, it's enabled the company to make the changes as soon as they are needed.

"I love that when we need to change something with our phones, I can make the change immediately myself," said Angel.

For more complex changes or troubleshooting, Calibre One can access the system remotely or guide Piccones' IT staff through the required steps. The biggest benefit for Piccones however is the visibility that ShoreTel (now Mitel) now provides administrators across the entire telecommunications network.

"Calibre One has also provided great technical support. They are always very timely in responding when we log a support ticket," said Angel.

Reduced Costs and Improved User Experience

There were a number of immediate advantages for Piccones in deploying a ShoreTel (now Mitel) Unified Communications solution using a Telstra SIP Trunking service. The new solution reduced traditional line rental and call costs by more than $25,000 per annum, which allowed Piccones to reinvest into the cost of upgrading the network and implementing the new ShoreTel (now Mitel) solution. Piccones is also now enjoying free calls not only among its own sites, but also free calls throughout Australia, and has significantly reduced its ongoing telephony administration and maintenance costs.

In addition, by accessing its Telstra technology fund, Piccones was able to cover some of the capital costs associated with the implementation of the new ShoreTel (now Mitel) solution.

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With "one giant phone system", the experience for Piccones' customers is now so much better. It's a simple process for calls to be transferred store to store, or to specific departments within the store. Staff can see missed calls and also have access to voicemail – something that was lacking in the previous telephony environment.

"We now have 70 percent fewer calls going to incorrect locations. As a result, callers are now reaching the company and department they want to talk to without having the run around," said Angel.

Reliability and Redundancy

Calibre One has also considered robustness in the design. Each site is configured with its own networking equipment to ensure survivability and is capable of independent operation in the case of network unavailability, localised power outages or other technical issue.

Future Plans

As Piccones is a Google Suite user, Angel is excited by the coming potential of the ShoreTel (now Mitel) Connect solution to integrate with the Google Suite and Google Chrome. While this capability is currently only available in the US, once it is released in Australia, the integration will allow Piccones staff to streamline workflows and increase efficiencies with integrated contacts, web and audio conferencing, and call control.

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