

Case Study.

CITIZENS ADVICE CHELMSFORD

citizens
advice

Chelmsford

Established in 1939 as an emergency war service, the Citizens Advice service has developed into the UK's largest independent advice provider.

Offering information and advice through face-to-face, phone and email services, and online, Citizens Advice Chelmsford assists with wide ranging issues including debt, welfare benefits, employment, housing and immigration.

The Problem

With clear lines of communication being the very lifeblood of a successful local Citizens Advice, making the right choice when selecting a new telephone system becomes critically important. Citizens Advice Chelmsford went through this exercise during 2014; Chief Officer Russ Mynott explains, "Although we had only been running our existing phone system

for a little over one year, the direction we wanted the organization to take was clearly going to necessitate an upgrade in our communications. In particular we wanted staff to be more contactable when away from the offices or working at home. We also wanted to investigate multi-tenanted capabilities as we were looking to sub-let our offices, delivering a full commercial solution, including communications. Add to this a desire for increased overall system reliability and decreased ongoing management costs and call charges, and we had the basis for our new telephone system checklist."

The next task for Citizens Advice Chelmsford was to put together a shortlist of potential business phone systems that looked likely to meet their needs. The final list was impressive in its breadth and after an intensive review process it was a system from a British



based vendor, SpliceCom, proposed by accredited partner M12 Solutions, which Citizens Advice Chelmsford eventually selected.

The M12 Solution

"Having ascertained that the SpliceCom system would both meet our immediate requirements and our budget, we began to dig a bit deeper," continues Russ. "Being a British company who build their products in the UK, we were able to arrange a visit to SpliceCom's manufacturing plant in High Wycombe. This immediately gave us confidence in the company, their products and the processes they have in place, particularly quality control. We were also impressed with the close business relationship between SpliceCom and M12 Solutions, due in no small part to the careful and selective vendor accreditation scheme prioritising quality over quantity. Finally, the calibre and adaptability of SpliceCom's products gave us the belief that we could use them as the basis to develop our commercial offer, whilst giving us every chance of future-

proofing ourselves against new and as yet unknown, business requirements."

Products and Software

The initial installation saw the existing Swyx system replaced with SpliceCom's S8025 Soft IP PBX running on a MultiApp Platform (MAP) and a mix of PCS 552 and PCS 562 IP Phones, numbering 50 in total. The same MAP server was also utilised to run SpliceCom's Vision Business Management suite, integrating call recording (Vision Record) with Vision

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search and playback of recordings, whilst also delivering detailed information on usage and trends for reviews and planning. In addition, SpliceCom's Navigate personal productivity app for Windows was installed on every employee's laptop or PC, providing integration with Outlook for contact "click-to-dial" and record "popping" on incoming calls. Navigate also provides a choice for staff when it comes to handling telephone calls; conventionally via a desktop phone, or entirely via the SpliceCom's Windows app for those who prefer to drive everything from their computer desktop.

The Result

The immediate impact is one of happy Citizen's Advice, happy staff and happy clients. "Our team were very quick to appreciate and embrace the new phone system," continues Russ. "The new technology has allowed us to be far 'smarter' when it comes to call handling. The end result allows us to assist a greater number of clients in a far more efficient manner."

Future Plans

The initial SpliceCom system installation is just the starting point for Citizens Advice

Chelmsford. Mobility is another area that Russ Mynott wants to explore further. "We plan to be in a position to provide home working as a viable option for staff, as well providing them with better contactability whenever they are out of the office on CCA business. The system we're now using provides us with the basis to finally address these incentives in a meaningful manner, whilst providing the same telephone facilities that staff have now come to expect in the office. By using smart phones, IP phones and even their existing home phones as bone fide extensions on our SpliceCom system our staff can remain connected where they are."

The opportunity also exists for Citizens Advice Chelmsford to sell tenancies that would allow other businesses to use their SpliceCom system as a commercial offering, another avenue they are keen to explore.

Citizens Advice Chelmsford want to expand their reach, by once again using the flexibility of the SpliceCom system to underpin a brand new service. "We are working on a development programme to provide touchscreen kiosks with integrated handsets," explained Russ.

"This will allow us to provide a true 24/7 remote support capability by utilising volunteers who will work from their home addresses. Working with fully integrated kiosk/touchscreen/handset delivery points will allow us to deliver an outreach service in a cost-effective manner.

Their Testimonial

When asked about the important things he'd learnt from his recent experiences that he'd like to pass on to others starting the search for a new phone system, Russ didn't hesitate. "Make sure you consider the package as a whole. System, handsets, associated applications and their on-going development, along with installation and support services; all are of equal and critical importance. And so is the relationship between the vendor and the supplier/maintainer that you'll be dealing with. The other key aspect to identify is how adaptable the system you're considering will be. It needs to meet both the requirements in hand, in our case mobility, homeworking and the

ability to support specialist handsets, as well as future-proofing your business against any new, and as yet undefined, service or usage demands that might be required. With SpliceCom and M12 Solutions we've got it right."

Russ Mynott, Chief Officer, Chelmsford CAB.

