

“Bringing Communications Together” SaskTel Cisco Unified Communications Solution

BACKGROUND

The South East Cornerstone School Division is responsible for the education of nearly 7,900 students across 39 schools in southeast Saskatchewan. As the Manager of Information Systems, Justin Arendt takes care of the communications and data services for the school division’s 1,500 staff members – from cellular and office phone systems to data lines and networking.

CHALLENGE

The daily communications requirements of the SE Cornerstone School Division had been addressed through a variety of complex systems. Their needs, however, were only being met on a basic level. The system was proving to be fragmented and cumbersome. “We had everything we needed at the desktop level,” says Justin Arendt, “but we had some issues with the front desk, routing calls and dealing with those sorts of areas.”

It was imperative to find a solution that would integrate all the required methods of communication (such as intercom, e-mail, phone and fax). At the same time, they were looking for a solution that would be easy to access and simple for staff to learn.

SOLUTION

The SE Cornerstone School Division has always maintained a strong relationship with SaskTel. When Arendt explained his needs, SaskTel had just the solution. “We wanted a particular kind of system based on the investments we’ve made in our Local Area Network (LAN) infrastructure,” says Arendt. The solution SaskTel recommended was the Cisco Unified Communications Solution; a VoIP system with the ability to carry both voice and data on the same line.

The Cisco Unified Communications Solution allows the School Division to easily manage changes to how the system is set up (such as extension numbers, voice mail and call routing) in-house without assistance from SaskTel. Previously, each user of the phone system also required a dedicated phone line, which could become quite costly. “Where we’ve really seen value,” explains Arendt, “is in the efficiencies in terms of turning around something such as adding a user, moving a phone set or changing an extension number, or being able to consolidate down to a single line without having to buy an additional line for every user.” As a result, the system has provided added value by increasing productivity.

With the help of SaskTel, rolling out the system was painless. “Our relationship with SaskTel is at a point where projects run really smoothly. Implementations go off without a hitch,” Arendt explains. “They have been just outstanding.”

Since a variety of people use the new system – from head office administrative staff to teachers and principals – the simplicity of learning to use the Cisco Unified Communications Solution was very beneficial to everyone. “For our normal users, a phone is a phone, and training on it was fairly simple,” says Arendt, “but I think people are starting to realize there is a lot more to these devices than just the phone, as they become more comfortable with the technology.” From programming school bells via a web page, to playing O Canada at the touch of a button, the School District has been able to integrate nearly every facet of their daily communications using the Cisco Unified Communications Solution.

Has the Cisco Unified Communications Solution met all of the School Division’s needs? “It has certainly met our needs, and then exceeded them in some ways,” says Arendt. “We’ve been really pleased with SaskTel’s help and assistance, and we would definitely recommend them.”



“Cisco VoIP has helped us increase our productivity significantly, and has provided extra value for our staff with respect to convenience and ease of use.”

**Justin Arendt
Manager of Information Systems
South East Cornerstone School Division**