

Modern Technology Implementation Improves Customer Service at Sonepar



An Opportunity Provides Distribution Company the Ability to Boost Productivity, Delight Customers

Like many companies, Sonepar Canada takes every opportunity to proactively stay on top of its technology. As its legacy communications system became more difficult to maintain due to the scarcity of parts, the Quebec-based arm of electrical products, safety and tools distribution, and sales company began examining the options available to better serve its 2,000 Canadian employees.

While the existing system was still under vendor support, Sonepar Canada could see the writing on the wall. The company did not want to wait until the system failed, thus negatively impacting the business and creating a customer service nightmare. A building move had been planned, and Sonepar Canada chose to sync up its unified communications replacement project for the most efficiency. This would allow it to install the infrastructure necessary, including routers, switches and cabling, to support a modern VoIP system in its head office of over 400 users and for its 122 satellite locations.

Sonepar Canada's criteria for a new unified communications system mirrors that of many of its peers. First and foremost, whatever is chosen needs, quite simply, to work. Anything Sonepar Canada chose had to be high quality and support the over 400 end users in its head office and for its 122 satellite locations.

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– Jonathan Cyr, Director of IT Support Services, Sonepar Canada

Challenges

- Aging telecommunications system
- Need to improve response time to customer service calls

Value Created

- Delivered new levels of customer service and employee satisfaction
- Reduced time spent on telecommunications system maintenance
- Introduced standard features like voicemail to email, bolstering productivity

Choosing a Tried and True Innovator Brand

Sonepar Canada turned to its communications distributor to help select a unified communications system. The partner provided several options to replace the existing Nortel CS1000 system, many of which seemed identical. After careful review of its options, Sonepar Canada chose Avaya IP Office Server Edition, along with a full complement of handsets, switches, and other hardware, to deploy on its own VMWare virtual server environment. Additionally, because Avaya is a trusted name in the industry, Sonepar Canada knew it would be easier to get approval for the expenditure from the head office in Paris.

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Avaya IP Office Server Edition included all the features Sonepar Canada needed, including voicemail to email. The handsets chosen, the Avaya 9806 IP Phones, include functions easy enough to use for even the newest employees.

“The Avaya 9806 IP Phones are very user friendly,” Cyr notes. “And the sound quality is great.”

Laying the Groundwork for Success

To prepare for the relocation and implementation, Sonepar Canada met with its Avaya partner multiple times to review floor plans and necessary equipment. The company realized it would need new switches to execute its vision for the new unified communications system, so on the recommendation of its partner, chose a stack of Avaya switches to create the foundation for the system.

“Essentially, we created a nice Avaya showroom here—we even had an Avaya executive over for a tour,” Cyr says.

Careful planning ensured that everything went smoothly. After receiving pallet upon pallet of phones, the most time-consuming piece of the implementation was unpacking and installing the 400 devices: removing packaging, plugging the phones into their destinations.

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– **Jonathan Cyr**, Director of IT Support Services, Sonepar Canada

“Everything happened the way it was supposed to,” Cyr recalls. The installation and cutover went as planned. The Sonepar Canada IT team ran into a compatibility issue, which Avaya addressed by issuing a patch so the unified communications system could run without a hitch.

Providing More Responsive Customer Service

As a service business, the sooner Sonepar Canada can respond to requests, the happier its customers are. After deploying Avaya IP Office Server Edition, Sonepar Canada employees leveraged voicemail to email, something that they did not have with the legacy system. Instead of having to retrieve messages from their phones, they now receive their voicemail messages directly in their email in real-time, which increases their productivity and improves their response time to customer inquiries, particularly when they’re out of office.

“Voicemail to email basically changed the lives of 400 people,” Cyr notes. “Customers are actually surprised at how quickly we respond to their calls now, since employees receive their voicemail messages in real-time.”

A Customizable Solution for Business Needs

As a bonus, Sonepar Canada also found that the Avaya 9806 IP Phones could be customized to how employees were used to doing business, in this case by programming manufacturers into the phone directories using vendor numbers. For example, instead of having to use the phone’s keyboard to type in “Acme” to dial that vendor, users type in “1111,” Acme’s vendor number. This saves countless seconds and heaps of frustration as employees can use familiar numbers and not have to stare at the phone’s keypad to make sure they’re entering in the right numbers.

Aside from a unified communications system that works and is easy to use, Sonepar Canada is also pleased with its relationship with Avaya.

“Avaya has reached out multiple times to make sure we’re satisfied with the product and the support we’ve received from its partners, as well as to introduce us to forthcoming products that may be useful in the future,” Cyr says. “We have a great relationship, and I would recommend Avaya to anyone.”

Learn More

For more information, contact your Avaya Account Manager or a member of the Avaya Edge channel partner program, or access other materials by clicking on Resource Library at www.avaya.com.

Solutions

- Avaya IP Office Server Edition
- Avaya 9608 IP Phones

About Sonepar Canada, Laval

Sonepar Canada is an independent family-owned company with global market leadership in the business-to-business distribution of electrical, industrial and safety products and related solutions. Sonepar Canada is a proud member of the Sonepar Group, the world's largest privately-held electrical distributor. In Canada, Sonepar is represented by seven locally managed electrical and industrial distributors and has over 110 locations with coverage in all nine provinces.

About Avaya

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter. Visit us at www.avaya.com.