

Lync 2010 Customer Solution Case Study



Community Arts Center Delivers Great Performance with Communications Solution Upgrade

“Retiring the PBX almost immediately saved us seven figures in cost avoidance in keeping the PBX infrastructure up-to-date and adding capacity as we grow.”

Alan Levine, CIO, The Kennedy Center

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Performing arts

Customer Profile

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts hosts a wide variety of performances in fulfilling its vision as a living memorial to President Kennedy.

Business Situation

The Center had a variety of communications challenges with a diverse, mobile workforce that was constantly changing. It was looking for a unified communications solution that was flexible and cost effective.

Solution

The Kennedy Center deployed Microsoft Lync Server 2010 for voice, conferencing, instant messaging, and presence capabilities.

Benefits

- Increased employee collaboration
- Avoided seven-figure PBX system replacement
- Reduced conferencing and telephony costs
- Fostered telework initiative
- Optimized contact center’s capabilities for fundraising and selling tickets

With shows constantly coming and going and seminars and consulting engagements around the world, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has complex communications needs. To reduce costs, facilitate collaboration, and ease the maintenance workload, the Kennedy Center wanted a voice over IP and conferencing solution based on commodity hardware. It also wanted a solution that would be easy for its staff members to adopt and that would interact with the other Microsoft solutions they use every day. The Kennedy Center chose to deploy Microsoft Lync Server 2010 and used it to replace its private-branch exchange (PBX) solution, in addition to its conferencing services and company supported mobile phones. With the deployment of Lync Server, the organization has improved its business processes and reduced costs, including a seven-figure expenditure for new PBX equipment.



Situation

Located on 17 acres overlooking the Potomac River in Washington, DC, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened on September 8, 1971. As the United States government's official memorial to President Kennedy, it fulfills his vision for the arts by producing and presenting a variety of theater and musicals, dance and ballet, orchestral, chamber, jazz, popular, world, and folk music, and multimedia performances for all ages. In addition to many touring productions, television performances, and Internet broadcasts, the center has a large arts education program active in all 50 states and internationally for students and educators. It also provides consulting services around the world for arts organizations, especially for those building new performing arts centers.

Given all that it does, the Kennedy Center has a very diverse organization, and many people frequently work outside the office. It also has a very fluid workforce with collaborators joining teams for a few weeks at a time for specific events. "We have many simultaneous events going on all the time that bring new people into the organization," says Alan Levine, CIO at the Kennedy Center. "For example, when we produce the Kennedy Center

"It quickly became clear that Lync could be a full PBX replacement."

Alan Levine, CIO, The Kennedy Center

Honors we increase our staff by about 60 people for a month." It also handles ticket sales and fundraising through multiple contact centers, which provides its own

challenges. With its dynamic, mobile workforce, the Kennedy Center was challenged to provide communications and collaboration tools to ensure its staff was productive.

For voice calls, the Kennedy Center deployed a Nortel private-branch exchange (PBX) solution. Because many employees move around the performance center or travel, they found that desk phones were expensive to deploy and provided limited value. "We are always working on new projects, and the staff moves around a lot. Doing moves, adds, and changes on the PBX was a big deal for us," says Levine.

Another issue with the PBX system for the Kennedy Center was the cost for equipment and maintenance. The organization only had one person on staff who could work on the equipment. "I would stay up at night worrying about that person winning the lottery," says Levine. "It was tough enough when he was out on vacation." The limited staffing also prevented the Center from implementing new capabilities on the PBX because it had no staff resources to work on new projects.

To help the performance center staff in Washington, DC, stay connected no matter where they were in the building, the Kennedy Center deployed mobile phones. Employees also used third-party

conferencing services for meetings and seminars. While these services helped bring teams together to accomplish tasks, they were expensive.

The Kennedy Center already used many Microsoft products within its IT organization, including Microsoft Exchange Server for email and Microsoft SharePoint Server for collaboration. When it started searching for a solution to provide unified communications for its employees, it looked to Microsoft for a solution and deployed Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 to provide instant messaging, presence, conferencing, and voice capabilities. Microsoft partner Enabling Technologies, which has multiple Gold competencies, helped with the deployment of Office Communications Server and provided expert advice to ensure the solution worked well for the Kennedy Center.

Solution

For the Kennedy Center, Office Communications Server 2007 R2 helped improve its communications processes. "The interoperability with Microsoft Office and SharePoint Server was a huge driver for us and ended up being a huge win," says Levine. Because of the success of that deployment, the organization decided to upgrade its earlier Microsoft communications solution to Microsoft Lync Server 2010, which provides enhanced versions of presence, instant messaging, robust conferencing, and enterprise voice—as well as improvements in topology, deployment, and management tools. Again, the Kennedy Center hired Enabling Technologies to provide guidance on all of the areas of integration with Lync, including media gateways, contact center solutions, video integration, and Lync endpoints, in addition to assistance with the implementation of Lync Server. With knowledge of the software, hardware, and third-party solution options for Lync, Enabling Technologies made it easy for the Kennedy Center to select and deploy the right solution for its needs.

Deploying a new solution

The Kennedy Center partnered with Enabling Technologies to deploy Lync Server 2010 in two data centers for high availability with most of the server roles running on virtual servers. It originally connected Lync Server to its Nortel PBX system to enable a flexible, low-risk migration strategy, allowing for individual user migration over a period of time rather than a risky and disruptive, sharp cutover. "Employees who saw other staff happily using Lync began to approach us and ask if they could be next. It quickly became clear that Lync could be a full PBX replacement," says Levine.

When it came time to retire the PBX in favor of Lync Enterprise Voice, the Kennedy Center put an AudioCodes session border controller in front of the PBX system and Lync Server 2010 to control the flow of incoming calls. "With the AudioCodes session border controller in place, we could seamlessly migrate extensions and functionality from the PBX to Lync Server 2010 at a pace that worked for our employees and business," says Levine. "It was very

low-risk, which is great because I didn't want to take any risks with telecommunications."

Employees at the Kennedy Center also have access to audio, video, and web conferences through the unified Lync 2010 client. "We hold more video and desktop sharing conferences with Lync 2010," says Levine. "We use it for training programs and webinars, even for groups up to 50 or 60 people," says Levine.

The Kennedy Center purchased several Polycom CX5000 panoramic videoconferencing devices for its conference rooms. "The Polycom CX5000 is a great, low-cost videoconferencing solution because it is plug-and-play and simple to use. Our employees love it," says Levine.

To make calls and participate in conference calls, the Kennedy Center staff use a variety of devices. With broad partner support for Lync-certified devices, employees can choose the phone or headset that works best for them at a great price. Many employees just use the Lync 2010 soft phone rather than worrying about using a separate device. The Kennedy Center also uses the Polycom CX500 IP phones for common areas.

Expanding Communications Capabilities

Because Lync Server 2010 runs on standard Windows Server operating systems and uses common management tools, such as Windows PowerShell, the Kennedy Center can rely on more than one person to manage the solution. "We cannot justify having a telecom solution depend on proprietary hardware and specialized skill sets anymore. Now, with a larger staff with the expertise to

"Lync Server 2010 has been a great solution for the Kennedy Center. It was easy to adopt, fits in well with our environment, and enabled a smooth, low-risk migration to VoIP."

Alan Levine, CIO, The Kennedy Center

work on Lync, we can do more," says Levine. "We integrated Lync Server 2010 with our customer relationship management [CRM] system. When a call comes in, Lync Server searches against the CRM system and brings up a customer dashboard that provides information about the caller." The organization is also using Role Based

Access Control (RBAC) to give administration rights to its help-desk staff so that they can perform moves, adds, and changes, which further reduces the management load on IT administrators.

The Kennedy Center is implementing Zeacom contact center software to transition its contact center staff onto Lync Server 2010, which will enable it to fully retire its PBX equipment. With the Zeacom solution, the Kennedy Center can also use Lync Server

2010 to handle chat sessions into the contact center from its website along with social media feeds.

The staff at the Kennedy Center rapidly adopted the methods of communication that Lync Server provides. The Lync 2010 adoption was fast because it layered functionality on top of applications the staff was already using. "From a user adoption point of view, it was one of the smoothest transitions we have done," says Levine. "Because Lync 2010 makes presence and contact cards available within Microsoft Office applications that our employees were already using, like Word and Excel, they viewed Lync as providing enhancements to these applications instead of something new to learn."

Benefits

Lync 2010 became popular so quickly that staff was actually asking for it. "Lync 2010 was one of the first big systems we rolled out where we actually had employees asking to be next," says Levine. "There was a very positive buzz overall."

Increasing Collaboration

Deploying Lync Server 2010 helped increase adoption of SharePoint Server across the organization. "People love that they can click on a contact's name in SharePoint Server and instantly send a message or place a call. That kind of interoperability makes SharePoint Server more user-friendly and caused our staff to use it more often," says Levine.

Avoiding a Seven-Figure Cost

By deploying Lync Server 2010, the Kennedy Center has avoided or reduced costs in several areas. It saw immediate gains in replacing its PBX system with Lync Enterprise Voice. "Retiring the PBX almost immediately saved us seven figures in cost avoidance in keeping the PBX infrastructure up-to-date and adding capacity as we grow," says Levine.

The Kennedy Center has not quantified cost saving in other areas, but it knows they are there. "Low-cost conferencing and collaboration has made a huge, huge difference for us. We have significantly reduced our use of third-party conferencing services, which directly lowers our costs," says Levine. "We also know people are traveling and not incurring international calling costs, because they can use Lync 2010 to connect with people." Levine experienced that benefit for himself when he was consulting on a new opera house being built in Oman. "I was in a car driving to Dubai and I was able to get a cellular connection on my laptop. I used that connection to participate in a Lync meeting with desktop sharing back to the United States and make productive use of the time. It only cost me the charge for the local cellular data access."

The Kennedy Center is also in the process of eliminating the cell phones it provides to its staff and converting them to wireless voice over IP (VoIP) phones that tie into Lync 2010. It is also using the Lync VoIP capabilities to reduce the cost of phone moves,

adds, and changes for temporary staff because Lync Server does not require a second set of cabling for telecom. "We can handle our constant demand for temporary phone setups very efficiently using Lync," says Levine.

The Kennedy Center also found that Lync Server 2010 helped it reduce costs when it was integrating two mergers. "We migrated those companies to Lync Server 2010 from their legacy PBX systems with very little disruption and at a very low cost. The rapid and seamless migration to Lync Server by simply extending our wide-area network really helped those mergers go smoothly," says Levine.

Providing Business Benefits

Employees at the Kennedy Center are also using Lync 2010 conferencing and sharing capabilities to improve their work. "Lync 2010 provided a whole new world of communications by layering in desktop sharing and videoconferencing," says Levine. "It required little to no user training and had immediate impact in terms of reducing travel and delivering webinars." When employees do travel, they bring their office extension with them and have a fully functioning communications client anywhere they have Internet access.

The portability that Lync provides for communications has helped to foster a telework initiative at the Kennedy Center. "People are embracing teleworking now that it's so easy to do and transparent to others. A strong teleworking program, largely enabled by Lync Server, has helped us to attract and retain staff," says Levine.

Looking to the Future

"Lync Server 2010 has been a great solution for the Kennedy Center. It was easy to adopt, fits in well with our environment, and enabled a smooth, low-risk migration to VoIP," says Levine. "It has already paid off tremendously and we will get a whole new level of benefits from Lync Server 2010 in our contact centers for fundraising and ticket sales."

With its successful adoption of Lync Server 2010, the Kennedy Center is looking forward to the next version. "Microsoft Lync Server 2013 will help solve the challenges we have had with external Mac clients and the new mobile capabilities will provide great benefits," says Levine.

Microsoft Lync Server 2010

Microsoft Lync Server 2010 ushered in a new connected user experience that transformed communication into an interaction that is collaborative, engaging, and accessible from anywhere. For IT, the benefits are equally powerful, with a highly secure and reliable communications system that works with existing tools and systems for easier management, lower cost of ownership, smoother deployment and migration, and greater choice and flexibility.

For more information about Microsoft Lync Server 2010, go to: www.microsoft.com/lync

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Lync 2010
 - Microsoft Excel 2010
 - Microsoft Word 2010
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Lync Server 2010
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
 - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010

Hardware

- AudioCodes Mediant 3000 SBC
- Polycom CX5000 videoconferencing device
- Polycom CX500 IP Phone

Third-Party Software

- Zeacom Communications Center

Partner

- Enabling Technologies



1. For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com
2. For more information about Enabling Technologies products and services, call (443) 625-5100 or visit the website at: www.enablingtechcorp.com
3. For more information about the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, call (800) 444-1324 or visit the website at: www.kennedy-center.org

This case study is for informational purposes only. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY. Document published January 2013