



Western Growers Case Study

A Seamless Upgrade From Legacy Avaya to Microsoft Lync, enabled by AudioCodes

Microsoft Lync Delivers Audio, Video and Conferencing Services Throughout the Widespread Organization



Background

Western Growers (WGA), based in Irvine CA, is an agricultural trade association representing growers, packers and shippers in California and Arizona. WGA provides comprehensive insurance, government advocacy, and employee training services to its members throughout the region. Their Pinnacle subsidiary group is a leading third party administrator for self-funded health benefit plans. The company maintains offices throughout the Southwestern United States

Challenges

Western Growers' IT department wanted to modernize its existing legacy Avaya IPT system voice communication platform for its headquarters and branch offices. It decided to add Microsoft Lync to the existing legacy Avaya platform for those locations. Michael Williams, WGA's Director of IT, brought in Datalink Networks consultants to review the existing environment and deliver a Lync 2010 design.

"The environment here at Western Growers was based on a legacy Nortel system. It was upgraded through Avaya, but was still very limited in its functionality outside of doing anything other than what a basic phone system would offer," says Williams.

"We did have a call center running on it, we did do some server call routing, but it was very, very limited. So that's why we started looking into unified communications: how can we upgrade our system?"

The Project

The Datalink Networks design team proposed a Lync Enterprise pilot that would deliver audio, video and conferencing services throughout the organization. The pilot would retain the legacy Avaya system and local PRI circuits, integrating them with Microsoft Lync using an AudioCodes Mediant Media Gateway. The rich collaboration features of Microsoft Lync were a key factor in the decision, providing all WGA employees with a comprehensive suite of communication capabilities encompassing I/M, presence, audio, video, messaging, data collaboration and conferencing services.

Williams says they initially set too small a scope for the pilot, by focusing at first just on WGA's sales team.

"We found that really would be limiting the scope and the feedback, so we opened it up to the entire company. At that point, we went back to Datalink Networks and asked that they come in and do a demonstration of Lync so that we could get the departments to rally behind it and see who really wanted to participate. We needed those people who were actually going to use the software and then give us their true feelings."



The pilot was expanded to 25 people from different departments throughout the organization, including staff who were out in the field.

WGA's management team approved the pilot, and the work began. As part of the network design, an AudioCodes Mediant Gateway was tasked with interconnecting the existing PRI lines and the legacy Avaya system to the Lync 2010 Servers. With this design, the Mediant 1000 is installed in a "drop and insert" architecture, between Western Growers PRI lines and the Avaya and Lync servers, effectively routing all inbound and outbound voice traffic to the intended destination system.

Williams plans to upgrade his Lync 2010 environment to Lync 2013, and when this is complete he is well positioned to add SIP trunk connectivity, adding Session Border Controller capabilities to the existing AudioCodes Mediant 1000 through a software upgrade. "A key benefit of selecting the Mediant 1000 was the ability to provide both gateway and Session Border Controller services on the same platform," said Williams.

Williams says the project was a resounding success.

"The pilot was built pretty much so they could do a complete installation after it was finished," he says. "So after the overwhelming response that everybody wanted to move forward, and we got everything approved – really we were just adding high availability."

The Solution

The result is one unified corporate communications system that enables legacy Avaya users and Lync users to seamlessly communicate, preserving all of the existing corporate voice and messaging functions.

"AudioCodes media gateways have the ability to transition legacy PRI lines, connecting them to Microsoft Lync. The gateway routes those calls and decides whether they continue on to my legacy PBX or on to Microsoft Lync. It makes those decisions for you," says Williams.

When asked whether the AudioCodes media gateway was important to his network, Williams noted "I would say it's an extremely vital piece of equipment because it's going to control every line I have coming into the building. You'd want to make sure you use a quality vendor like AudioCodes so that if you have a problem, you have experienced people behind you."

Williams is impressed: "It's been great. It automatically does the routing, so as we transition those people to other offices, we move them to Microsoft Lync phones. We make a quick fix inside the gateway, and now our legacy phone transfers those calls over to the Lync phones and nobody knows the difference. They just know that I'm dialing a four-digit extension I've had for 15 years and it just works."

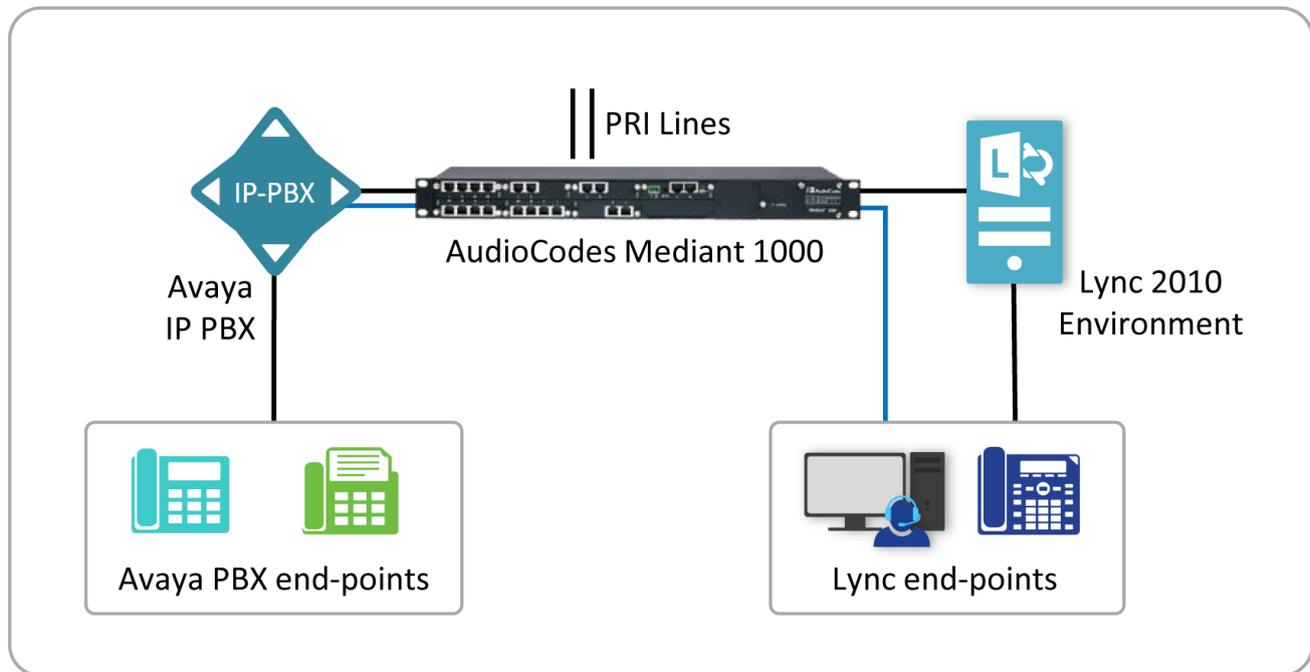
Shortly after the initial deployment, Western Growers expanded their operation to a second building.



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Michael Williams

Director of IT at Western Growers Association



Western Growers integration to Lync with AudioCodes Mediant 1000

“We only had a few weeks to deploy this,” says Williams. “So rather than having to buy another legacy PBX and deploy that, we got an AudioCodes Survivable Branch Appliance (SBA) that would tie into our larger AudioCodes gateway we have here in the Irvine office. Once we tied the two together, we brought in another 50 end points.”

“The people in the new office have Lync phones, being served by the AudioCodes SBA so if anything happened to our Irvine HQ office, they’re still up, they’re running, and they can make phone calls.”

Results

Western Growers used the capabilities of Lync to migrate customer service employees from the main office to a “home based” office. Many of the department personnel were commuting over two hours daily to the main office. In order to save on commuting time and travel expense, WGA provided each agent with a Lync phone tied to WGA’s main number, and a thin client to support data requirements. The program has enabled customer service agents to work at home, with full access to resources of the main office and has saved WGA thousands of dollars per month in office space. WGA’s customer service personnel can communicate with Corporate through instant messaging, voice and video services and take full advantage of Lync services, while still fully communicating with the legacy Avaya system.

As WGA continues to add employees and locations, they will look to Lync-enabled communication devices to provide this support.

“The plan here at Western Growers is to expand the Lync network, and eventually replace our legacy PBXs in the field. We will be installing more AudioCodes SBA’s similar to what we did in a near-by office. When we complete this transition we will have four-digit dialing for everyone in the company through Lync clients, desk phones, and mobile devices. I don’t care what office you’re in, I don’t care where you happen to be at that moment, I dial your extension, Microsoft Lync will find you,” says Williams.

About Western Growers Association

Western Growers, based in Irvine CA, is a trade association serving the agricultural and specialty crop industry in California and the Southwestern United States. WGA provides comprehensive insurance, government advocacy, and employee training services to its members throughout the region.

About Datalink Networks Inc.

Datalink Networks is a leading consulting and engineering company specializing in Microsoft Lync and Private Cloud services. Datalink Networks has designed and deployed Lync systems for commercial and public sector clients throughout the West for over 5 years. Datalink Networks offers comprehensive Lync Services, from consulting and design, to deployment and maintenance support. Datalink Networks is a Microsoft Certified Lync Voice Partner and is also Certified as Lync and Exchange Planning and Deployment Partner.

About AudioCodes

AudioCodes Ltd. (NasdaqGS: AUDC) designs, develops and sells advanced Voice over IP (VoIP) and converged VoIP and Data networking products and applications to Service Providers and Enterprises. AudioCodes is a VoIP technology market leader focused on converged VoIP & data communications and its products are deployed globally in Broadband, Mobile, Enterprise networks and Cable. The company provides a range of innovative, cost-effective products including Media Gateways, Multi-Service Business Routers, Session Border Controllers (SBC), Residential Gateways, IP Phones, Media Servers and Value Added Applications. AudioCodes' underlying technology, VolPerfect HDTM, relies on AudioCodes' leadership in DSP, voice coding and voice processing technologies. AudioCodes High Definition (HD) VoIP technologies and products provide enhanced intelligibility and a better end user communication experience in Voice communications.

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