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*Steps to Work
saves £6,000 a
year on call
costs through
VoIP solution
from Toshiba*



Case Study

Steps to Work (Walsall) Limited is an organisation helping unemployed people in Walsall to find work and develop better skills through training courses. Founded in 1999 following a successful period as a project within Walsall Local Authority, the organisation proved so successful that it became a permanent registered charity in 2003.

Steps to Work tendered alongside other recruitment suppliers for jobs within a variety of organisations including Jobcentre Plus, private companies and the local council. Then in July 2006 Steps to Work won the prime contract to manage the 'New Deal' delivery in the North Black Country and the 'Master Vendor' solution for the Local Authority handling all temporary employee recruitment subcontractors on their behalf.

Managing rapid growth

Only a small supplier at the time, Steps to Work had two offices in Walsall and a total of 50 employees. Winning the contract meant it needed to extend its remit to cover Wolverhampton, and

over the course of two months two further offices were opened and the total number of employees increased dramatically to 120.

John Brewer, CEO of Steps to Work, says, "Our employees spend a large amount of their day on the telephone, calling remote workers and making inter-office calls. Each telephone call lasts for around ten minutes and we were being charged external rates. In the light of the new office openings, we made the decision to review the telephony infrastructure to try and reduce costs and improve productivity."

As the four offices are linked via a data network, Steps to Work realised they could use a Voice over IP (VoIP) solution to make calls over the same network. This would require an upfront investment to prepare the network for voice traffic, however it would also considerably reduce operational costs as inter-office calls would effectively be free. It asked its telephony provider, CS Communications, to recommend a solution.

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The Strata solution

Steps to Work have been a Toshiba client for over ten years, and were already using a Strata CTX670 in the head office. CS Communications suggested implementing one Strata CIX670 and two Strata CIX100s at the three remote offices, all run as separate systems linked via VoIP trunks.

The Strata CIX systems are based on a single software platform, and share common hardware with the Strata CTX making them very straightforward to link together. They can be installed as a TDM, Hybrid-IP or Pure-IP solution and reconfigured as required, providing Steps to Work with a very flexible system which offers complete investment protection should their needs change.

Brewer comments: "Although the initial cost of implementing the system was a significant investment, we are future proofing for potential expansion. The telephony infrastructure will support our growth through reduced call costs and from previous Toshiba systems, we know they are extremely durable and will support us long-term."

Improved working practices

Since implementation, Steps to Work have generated a saving of £1,500 per quarter on reduced call costs, therefore creating a saving of £6,000 over the course of a year. This reduction in operating costs is vitally important as Steps to Work is a charity and relies on regeneration grants for funding.

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The system also has a number of features that enable the organisation to streamline day-to-day processes. By integrating the VoIP network with employee's mobile phones, all calls to the office are free. It is also possible to transfer calls to other sites just by dialling the extension number. Both of these features improve productivity, and also allows Steps to Work to take advantage of remote working capabilities in the future.

Brewer says: "We have been delighted with the Toshiba system and how it has improved our working practices. We placed all of our trust in CS Communications and Toshiba Business Communications Division, and have been impressed by their technical expertise."

Brewer concludes: "In the near future it may be necessary to open a fifth office, and due to the setup of the Toshiba solution it will be possible to just plug a new solution into our existing infrastructure. We are very happy the Toshiba system will be able to expand with us, and enable us to realise even further cost savings."



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We will provide communication solutions that deliver complete mobility of operations and ease of configuration. Toshiba offers best in class migration, quality and reliability and is dedicated to protecting our customers' investment. With flexibility and choice, Toshiba is empowering organisations to do business the way they want to.