The Agency Group

Avaya IP Office provided this leading global talent booking agency with an easy, cost-effective transition to world-class IP telephony

Background

The Agency Group is one of the world’s leading booking agencies, with 160 employees and a combined roster of over 1,500 artists. The firm represents a wide variety of music genres, with notable clients such as Pink Floyd, Nickelback, The Black Keys, and Paramore. They also have Literary, Speakers, and Events departments.

As a global operation, The Agency Group recognized the need for a converged voice/data platform that could facilitate communications across multiple offices, as well as keep their agents connected while on the road supporting artists. Because conference calling with multiple, geographically-dispersed clients is a necessity in the entertainment business, The Agency Group wanted a solution with a built-in conference bridge and the ability for agents to use mobile handsets and/or laptops without incurring costly phone charges.

Since they were already using the Avaya Business Communication Manager (BCM) platform, anything they could do to protect that investment would be an exceptional benefit. It was also important that any new products operate out of the gate with smooth, reliable connections to their current

Challenges

• Facilitate communications between offices in North America and Europe
• Deploy an advanced small business system that creates seamless communications for agents both in and out of the office
• Deliver cost savings on conference calls and long distance
• Ensure easy transition from BCM and integration with existing desk phones
• Help employees work faster, better

Value Created

• Investment protection and easy transition from BCM; same desk phones, same extensions
• $500-800 per month savings on conference calling
• Up to $50,000 savings per year on long distance and other costs
• Improved productivity
• Enhanced collaboration
• Seamless connectivity anywhere, any time
• Ease of management
• Extremely professional image
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Director of IT for The Agency Group

platforms. Above all, any transition had to be seamless for staff, and most importantly, transparent for their clients.

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Superior Integration with Avaya

After considering various options, The Agency Group selected Avaya IP Office as the best transition solution, based on its superior integration with platforms such as Avaya Norstar and Avaya BCM. Focusing on their Toronto office, the company implemented Avaya IP Office running the latest release 7.0 software. This offered interoperability with the BCM systems in other offices and enabled them to leverage their considerable investment in existing handsets. After the successful implementation in Toronto, they added IP Offices to their London location, as well as a new office in Nashville.

Avaya IP Office is a simple, powerful solution for small businesses that place communications at the heart of their business – for customer service, cost savings, and productivity improvements. It provides intelligent routing of wired, wireless, and Internet communications over broadband connections or a Virtual Private Network (VPN), for savings in calling costs. By streamlining office, mobile, e-mail, text, and messaging into one convenient interface, employees can be more productive, efficient, and responsive to clients.

To meet the varied needs of small businesses, several Avaya IP Office options are available. The Agency Group selected IP Office Preferred Edition, which offers a wide range of capabilities, including intelligent call routing, call recording, and a built-in, encrypted 128-party “Meet-me” conference bridge.

Finally, to support a global, on-the-go workforce, The Agency Group selected the IP Office Power User application and IP phones with VPN capability to supplement their existing T7000 terminals for their mobile agents and executives. For example, at their London location, they’ve installed over 60 IP endpoints from Avaya’s 1600 and the advanced 9600 series.

Thanks to IP Office’s networking capabilities, employees in all offices see the same uniform, “office-like” features, such as four-digit extension dialing, voice messaging, and versatile call routing from any location via an IP phone, mobile phone, or laptop. And with the addition of IP Office Softphone, a key component of the Power User solution, employees can leverage WiFi networks for IP/VPN-based calling as a cost-effective alternative to mobile phone use/charges.

Gold commented, “Avaya has done a good job of bringing the features of our existing phones to the IP Office platform, which makes the transition easier. All of the codes are carried forward, so programming our phones is very simple, and users can keep working with them, without any added input from IT.”

Investment protection

The Agency Group was pleased to be able to preserve their existing investment in T7000 series sets by re-using them on their new Avaya IP Office platform. This compatibility and interoperability between Avaya IP Office and BCM platforms helped ensure a transparent transition for communications across their offices company-wide.

Gold said, “This was a huge plus for us because roughly 50% of your investment is going to be in the phones. By allowing us to keep our existing phones and just replace the phone switch, we saved a considerable amount of money just in the initial investment. With BCM switches in New York and Los Angeles, and Avaya IP Office in Toronto, we’re able to communicate between offices using a 4-digit extension without any changes from our end.”

According to Avaya’s internal research, small and mid-sized businesses that move from an existing Norstar or BCM system to an Avaya IP Office solution can typically protect 40–60% of their current investment through cost-saving re-use and business continuity.

Enhanced global communications at reduced cost

“With IP Office, we have software that we install on our agents’ laptops known as a ‘softphone,’ and as long as they have access to WiFi, they can fire up their softphone, log in, and their laptop now becomes their desk
phone,” Gold stated. “This lets them stay connected by making and receiving phone calls from their laptop, regardless of where they are in the world. It could be a hotel room in China or the airport in downtown Toronto. To someone who’s calling them, it’s seamless.”

From executives arranging concert tours halfway around the world to agents answering calls anytime, day or night, The Agency Group has communications covered with their IP Office solution. It enables their highly mobile workforce to stay connected, build relationships, respond to clients’ expectations for 24x7 availability, and save money at the same time.

Gold commented, “Avaya IP Office is giving us the ability to save money on toll calls overseas and conference calling. As interoffice calls between Toronto, New York, LA, and Nashville are now free, we’re saving a considerable amount there as well.”

Gold added, “Recently the president of the company went with a group of music industry professionals for a conference on bringing music to China. At the end of several weeks, everyone had long distance bills of $3,000 or $4,000, while his bill was zero. It was a seamless trip for him. If he needed to talk to his assistant, he just dialed his four-digit extension; he could talk to all of the bands he deals with and to his wife and kids. He was able to stay connected, and that was even more important than the cost savings.”

Improved capabilities for employee collaboration

The Agency Group can fully support agents and clients based around the world through Avaya IP Office conferencing, which provides an ample 128-party conference bridge with the flexibility to be used as two separate bridges with up to 64 parties per conference. This allows the company to host conference calls for larger parties on an ad-hoc or scheduled basis while eliminating the need for external conferencing providers.

According to Gold, “This conferencing gives us the ability to hold our internal and external calls that have 20 or 25 people, and essentially do it at no cost to us, as opposed to spending $500 to $800 per month for an outside service provider.”

In addition to conference calling, this solution delivers cost savings while fostering better collaboration among company employees. The key resides in the effortless VoIP connections between the company’s offices, enabled by Avaya IP Office and the company’s VPN.

“When you factor in all the individual savings, it could be $20,000, $40,000, $50,000 per year, and that doesn’t even account for the intangibles, such as the level of communication it raises between the staff,” Gold said. “From the user perspective, you can interact with another office without the constant reminder of long-distance calling costs, knowing you have to get done and get off. As it is essentially a free call, you can get what you need accomplished. This ability to collaborate with people in other offices sends productivity through the roof.”

Exceptional voice quality and reliability

Thanks to their Avaya IP Office solution, The Agency Group has been able to bring a new level of professionalism to their business, built on exceptional voice quality and reliability.

“We’ve found the voice quality is better than using a landline,” Gold stated. “It sounds like you are in the office next door. This, along with being able to manage our own conference calls, gives us a very professional image, and you can’t put a price on that.”

Easy management and operations

Working behind the scenes to manage The Agency Group’s sophisticated global communications systems has never been easier. Avaya IP Office Manager provides single-screen access to all necessary monitoring and controls to keep communications flowing smoothly.

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Gold explained, “We have all locations listed in one simple, usable interface. There is consistency, so switching between systems is easy and efficient. I don’t have to worry about putting on extra hats depending on what system or office I work on.”

**Trusted providers for future growth**

While focusing on how best to transition from their legacy platform, The Agency Group was ultimately reassured by Avaya’s reputation and track record in the industry. They felt that Avaya offers outstanding R&D expertise, as well as an ongoing commitment to designing products and services that meet the needs of small and mid-sized businesses. These factors, coupled with the company’s successful relationship with an Avaya channel partner, ultimately led them to select Avaya IP Office.

As Gold noted, “Our Avaya channel partner understands what we need. They have been involved with the music business and know how reliant we are on phones, and the need to respond quickly. The Avaya people assured us that they had taken all the steps necessary to integrate some BCM and Norstar functionality into the IP Office system, and they were true to their word. Everything was installed perfectly, ran perfectly, and continues to run perfectly.”

**Learn More**

For more information, contact your Avaya Account Manager or a member of the Avaya Connect channel partner program, or access other collaterals by clicking on Resource Library at [www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

All statements were made by Howie Gold, Director of IT for The Agency Group.

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**Systems and Applications**

- Avaya IP Office 7.0
- IP Office Preferred Edition and IP Office Power User
- SIP Trunking
- Existing T7000 series digital terminals
- 1600 Series IP Deskphones, 9600 Series IP Deskphones

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About Avaya

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