

Next-gen collaboration technology helps take a print publication into a new era



The Globe and Mail achieves agility and alacrity through Allstream cloud-based collaboration and communications.





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Justine Haymer, Unified Communications Manager, Information Technology, The Globe and Mail

Business Challenge

When one of Canada’s leading news organizations relocated its Toronto headquarters into a brand-new building, it served as a catalyst for upgrading its legacy communications infrastructure. There wasn’t anything wrong with the old PBX — it still worked, and it was still reliable — but it didn’t provide the flexibility and mobility required by a modern workforce.

“We didn’t want to go with an on-premise solution anymore,” said Justine Haymer, Unified Communications Manager, Information Technology, with The Globe and Mail, who works with an IT team of 30 personnel. “We wanted to get away from capital projects, from having to ask for capital every couple of years. We wanted to go in the direction of a managed solution.”

Previously, the Globe was using a Nortel Avaya PBX. And, like many older PBXs, it was reliable, but lacked flexibility. As technology in the workplace evolved — from being tethered to the desktop to working remotely and on-the-go — this lack of flexibility was starting to catch up with them.

“If you wanted to move, you’d have to put in a request,” said Haymer. “You couldn’t have that number ring you at home; you were chained to your desk in the office.” It also required the services of a dedicated technician to maintain and manage the PBX on a full-time basis.



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Solution

Since the Globe was moving its headquarters into a brand-new building at the end of 2016, the decision was made to upgrade its legacy PBX to a new, modern unified communications system. **“We wanted the best technology in place; we wanted flexibility and mobility,”** said Haymer. **“Our employees have multiple lines, we have a lot of toll-free numbers and we outsource our call centre, so we wanted a true telephony solution — but we wanted it managed, we wanted flexibility, mobility and efficiency, and we wanted affordability,”** said Haymer.

Three vendors were invited to submit an RFP, each with two proposals: one for an on-premise solution, and one for managed services. The winning solution was Allstream’s Unified Communication (UC) Cloud Voice - Collaboration Services

(CS), a fully managed cloud-based service that delivers Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) applications over a secure IP-VPN network.

The service allows users to quickly access cloud-based resources wherever they’re working, while the organization can manage costs with predictable per-user monthly rates and easily scale service levels up or down. It also eliminates the headaches of equipment maintenance, software patches and system upgrades, which was an important factor for Haymer.



“It was a smooth transition; we didn’t disrupt the business in any way. We accomplished way more than we set out to — on time and under budget with no business disruption.”

Justine Haymer, Unified Communications Manager, Information Technology, The Globe and Mail

Approach

Moving its headquarters from one physical location to another posed unique challenges. The new building wasn’t ready when staff were required to move in; they had to move over the course of a weekend while construction was still going on.

Haymer and her team worked with Allstream to port numbers over on two separate dates, so some employees could start working from home before the move. There were also about 30 critical numbers that had to be transferred back to the PBX from the VoIP system for about a week, and then back again.

“That wasn’t in the statement of work, but Allstream worked with us to help us through that,” said Haymer. “They went above and beyond to find workaround solutions with these last-minute business requirements that came up because of the shifting target of the move date. The solution is great, but the team was outstanding — they bent over backwards to make sure we were happy.”

Results

Five sites were converted, for a total of about 650 users who are now using Cisco Jabber exclusively for their communications requirements. “Jabber works on Macs, and we have a large user group on Macs — they historically get excluded. So that was part of our requirement,” said Haymer. There was also a requirement to continue providing physical phones to the editorial department, since reporters need to connect their digital recording devices to a physical phone during interviews.

The sites went live between March 2016 to April 2017, a process that included quality assurance testing and user training; each employee received about an hour and a half of training on Cisco Jabber. The first site to go live was the Globe’s smaller Montreal office, with about 15 users, followed by its sites in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. “We couldn’t have asked for a better cutover,” said Haymer. “All of them went off without a hitch, but we did a lot of preparation and double-checking. It was almost the perfect project.”

Overall, the project was considered highly successful, and feedback from users has been positive. “It was a smooth transition; we didn’t disrupt the business in any way. We accomplished way more than we set out to — on time and under budget with no business disruption,” said Haymer. “We ported 1,000 numbers in multiple locations and they’re all connected with four-digit dialling and advanced telephony features.”



Using Allstream’s UC Cloud Voice - CS with Cisco technology, The Globe and Mail has achieved cost savings while providing flexibility and mobility for employees — all without losing any advanced telephony features.



Benefits

Savings

It's early days, but so far the results have been positive. SIP Trunking, for example, is part of the managed service provided by Allstream — an IP telephony service that delivers cost savings by replacing voice circuits with a single IP connection, eliminating the need to manage multiple PRIs and networks. "We've definitely had long-distance savings because of SIP Trunking," said Haymer. "I would say we're paying much less overall — we're utilizing the same data circuits, so we're not paying for separate wireline services anymore, which translates to huge savings at the branch offices."

There were also cost savings related to the project itself; Haymer expected to hire a project manager and independent VoIP consultant because they didn't have that expertise in-house. "We didn't have to hire anyone because we had such a strong combined project team with Allstream, so that's also part of the cost savings," she said. They also no longer need a full-time PBX expert.

Flexibility

But it wasn't just about cost savings — the new UC service provides the flexibility and mobility the Globe was looking for. "We don't do true hoteling, but some people share a desk, so this gives them the ability to log into any hard phone, and that's a big advantage," said Haymer. "We have hard phones, softphones, more choices and more support."

Service

Allstream had proven itself on a previous technology project, replacing incumbent circuits to branch offices with IP-VPN. "I had never done business with Allstream before, so I took a chance," said Haymer of the IP-VPN project. "The communication level was spectacular — I've never experienced anything like that. They came in cost-wise as well, but to be honest it was the service side of it that I was like, 'wow.'"

That service level was a contributing factor to Allstream's winning bid, as was Allstream's nationwide high-performance IP network that integrates SIP Trunking for secure, reliable connections and unlimited bandwidth — key for the Globe's complex communications requirements.

About Allstream

Allstream is a leader in business communications throughout North America. Founded over 170 years ago in parallel with Canada's first transcontinental railroad, Allstream continually re-invented itself to remain a leading provider of business communication services. Allstream's offerings include a range of innovative, highly scalable, managed services voice, internet and connectivity solutions for enterprise customers. We combine scalable solutions with exceptional customer service to deliver the latest technology, and we're positioned to help our customers accelerate into the future.

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allstream.com**

Contact Sales:

sales@allstream.com

U.S.: 1.888.781.1443

Canada: 1.800.625.0025

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