

The Right Prescription

IPC Technologies helps the National Community Pharmacists Association improve communications and boost efficiency with the ShoreTel Unified Communications platform.

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) represents America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 22,700 independent community pharmacies, pharmacy franchises and chains. Together they represent an \$88 billion healthcare marketplace, employ more than 65,000 pharmacists, and dispense over 40 percent of all retail prescriptions.

Until recently, the Alexandria, Va.-based trade association had an aging phone system that was inflexible, difficult to manage and lacked needed features. With help from IPC Technologies, NCPA found the ShoreTel Unified Communications Solution to be strong medicine for curing its phone system ills.

“Our previous system was about eight or nine years old and we were at a point when we needed to look for something better,” said Terry Hall, VP of Operations & Information Systems, NCPA. “A former member of my IT staff recommended IPC Technologies. We looked at several other systems, including Avaya, Cisco and Nortel, but found that the ShoreTel system from IPC gave us more features for less cost and was better suited our operational needs.”

A Dose of Efficiency

A key benefit of the ShoreTel system is its ability to support mobile users and teleworkers. Individual end-users can easily set up the system to forward calls to a mobile or home phone.



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“A lot of our people have smartphones and BlackBerrys, so we wanted to be able to have phone calls going directly to those devices,” said Hall. “We also have a couple of people who have offices at home. We wanted to have their phone calls forwarded to them so they could respond as though they were here at the office. ShoreTel easily does that.”

Another popular feature is the ShoreWare Personal Call Manager. This software helps enhance communications and improve productivity by enabling end-users to manage their communications through a single interface.

“Your voice mail messages go into Microsoft Outlook so that you can easily manage them,” said Jane Davey, Senior Director of Operations, NCPA. “Call Manager also integrates the phone system with Outlook contacts — you can bring up a contact and dial from your computer. In addition, there is a history of several thousand phone calls with caller ID in case you miss a call and the party doesn’t leave a voice mail.”

“Several members of our staff have commented that they love the call tracking feature. It’s something we didn’t have before,” Hall said.

Easy to Swallow

All of these advanced features are easy for end-users to access and use via the ShoreTel phone instrument itself or a desktop PC. IPC Technologies conducted several hours of training to help NCPA staff become familiar with the system, and provided a detailed “cheat sheet” that walks end-users through various functions.

“The system features are straight-forward and easy to use. Everybody can transfer, get their voice mail and read the directory,” said Davey. “Conferencing is also self-explanatory, which is important to us. We have a number of committees that conduct conference calls on almost a weekly basis. I prefer not to use an outside service for conference calls, so we purchased the ShoreTel Converged Conferencing solution. We can easily handle all our own conference calls at no additional outside cost.

“We also really like the Operator Call Manager console. When a call comes in, the operator answers the phone then drags the call to the appropriate staff person to transfer. She can consult before transferring if she wants. If the staff person indicates that they’re out of the office or in a meeting, she can see that at a glance. It’s all visual and very easily done.”

Davey especially appreciates the streamlined administration of the ShoreTel system. Unlike NCPA’s old PBX, the ShoreTel system makes moves, adds and changes simple.

“It’s fabulous. We can go into the ShoreTel Director software and add, delete or move people so easily,” she said. “If someone needs to move, the person just picks up their phone, goes to the new location and plugs it in, and their extension is immediately available. There are no problems whatsoever.”

Speedy Recovery

NCPA wanted to get the new phone system in place prior to a major meeting so that staff would have a chance to become familiar with all of the features. IPC Technologies provided a dedicated team that ensured all project requirements were met and everything ran smoothly.

“They gave us a schedule of when various aspects of the project would be complete, and they stayed right on that schedule,” said Hall. “The IPC staff was great, from the sales person down to the technicians who were here on site helping our staff. And whenever we have a minor problem and feel we need to call them, they’re very responsive.

“We haven’t had any big problems — mostly I’ve just had questions on how to set up some of the features,” Davey said. “I shoot the support desk an e-mail and they respond within two hours.”

The National Community Pharmacists Association is dedicated to supporting the thousands of independent community pharmacists who dispense the medications that help us feel better. IPC Technologies and ShoreTel provided the NCPA with the right prescription for streamlined communications.



IPC is one among a short list of this country's premier IT solutions providers, delivering to our clients award-winning Consulting Services, Managed Services, and Training. Delivering solutions that make good economic sense to businesses and organizations, IPC supports an ever-changing array of "Best of Breed" Technology Products. Our clients, ranging from Fortune 50 firms to start-up enterprises, have experienced attractive returns on investment from technologies implemented and supported by IPC since 1981.

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