

## Sound Investment

United Bank strengthens its communications assets with help from ShoreTel and IPC Technologies.

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**W**hile the U.S. banking industry has generally taken a public-relations beating in the midst of the ongoing global financial crisis, United Bank has remained a shining example of stability, strength and sound management practices.

“In a difficult economy and continued challenging times for financial institutions, United increased earnings, increased the stock price by 46 percent, and increased the dividend to shareholders for the 37th consecutive year,” Richard M. Adams, Chairman and CEO of United’s parent company, United Bankshares, noted in a recent address to shareholders. “Only one other major

banking company in the U.S. has achieved such a record.”

A regional banking company with dual headquarters in Charleston, W. Va., and Washington, D.C., United has consolidated assets of approximately \$8.4 billion with 126 full-service offices in West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Washington, D.C. United is now the 53rd-largest commercial banking company in the country based upon market capitalization through 2010.

### Answering the Call

One of the ways United Bank and its officers have remained good stewards of capital for their customers and shareholders is through the utilization of efficient and effective technology solutions. A perfect example is the ShoreTel Unified Communications

infrastructure currently being implemented with the help of the experts at IPC Technologies.

To date, IPC has installed ShoreTel systems at more than 50 of United's branch offices. Bruce Steere, United Bank's senior vice president and chief technology officer, says the installations have been completed within budget and on time and have greatly reduced the organization's monthly phone system costs and long-distance charges. Additionally, United has experienced improvements in employee collaboration, productivity and customer service.

## All Together Now

United had literally outgrown its previous communication infrastructure. Over the past decade, the company has purchased 30 banks — all with different telephone systems. That created what Steere called a "Heinz 57 collection" of systems from vendors such as Verizon, Cisco, Avaya and Shoreline Communications (ShoreTel's predecessor).

For financial reasons, United has had to maintain these various systems until they were fully depreciated. With an eye toward eventually standardizing on the ShoreTel platform, United has utilized IPC to conduct ongoing implementations as branches reached the end of their depreciation cycles.

Steere notes that this process has resulted in his staff developing a high level of competency on each system, which gave United all the more confidence in its evaluation of ShoreTel.

"The ShoreTel system is by far the most flexible and the easiest to maintain for our very small operations' staff," he said.

ShoreTel's distributed architecture is ideal for companies such as United Bank that span multiple locations because the ShoreTel system appears and behaves as a single, unified system. What's more, ShoreTel delivers unmatched reliability, scalability and manageability, plus a user interface that sets the standard for ease-of-use.

## Phones with Benefits

The ShoreTel system provides United employees with many key features that streamline business communications, improve communication accuracy and enhance overall end-user productivity. The system provides four-digit dialing to all branch offices and gives employees convenient one-stop access to all messages (voice mail, e-mail and fax) using their choice of access device — phone, PC, e-mail client, Web browser, wireless handset or personal digital assistant.

Another advantage is the ease in which employee moves, adds and changes can be accomplished. Unlike traditional phone systems that require service calls, hardware relocation and software modifications, ShoreTel's IP-based system makes moving a phone as easy as relocating a laptop computer within the office.

"The ability to change things and move people faster is important from a disaster recovery standpoint," said Steere. "We've actually had to move people out of a facility that lost power, and we've been able to have them back up and running in another facility in a matter of minutes. That's very powerful for us."

Having a responsive and willing technology partner such as IPC is also an important consideration for United Bank. As a ShoreTel authorized Champion Partner, IPC Technologies has been able to provide procurement, demonstration, configuration and implementation services for the bank. In addition, IPC staffers have helped United's in-house staff develop the necessary skills to deploy some of the new branches without assistance. In such instances, IPC continues to provide equipment acquisition and software maintenance.

"We have been very satisfied with IPC's oversight and consulting assistance," said Steere. "We would without reservation recommend the ShoreTel platform and IPC as a very capable installation partner for ShoreTel systems."



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