



HOUSE OF TRAVEL

CRUISING

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EVENTS

SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATIONS MAKE HAPPY TRAVELLERS

"Staff are enjoying the mobility and flexibility, being able to work from home, participate in video meetings and easily make calls while traveling."

Dave Veronese, CIO, House of Travel

Behind the Business

HOUSE OF TRAVEL ENJOYS THE JOURNEY TO SIP TRUNKING

Thanks to Spark's SIP trunking solutions.

Iconic kiwi travel services provider, House of Travel, is passionate about seeking out new travelling experiences and sharing them with its New Zealand customers.

Dave Veronese, House of Travel's CIO, is focused on delivering ICT services that help the business innovate and grow and is making its stores modern workspaces that blend the latest mobility and



House of Travel's new modern workplace

collaboration technologies. By increasing the speed at which its people can communicate and access information anywhere and at any time, it is reducing costs and delivering a massive boost to productivity.

Dave explains that in 2013, they selected Spark's SIP trunking service, Voice Connect, to simplify the network architecture, increase reliability and save money. He also overhauled the desktop environment and moved all staff to the latest Microsoft technologies, and began to deploy Microsoft's unified communications solution, Lync 2013.

That made House of Travel one of the first companies in New Zealand to take advantage of the integration of Voice Connect with Microsoft Lync 2013.

"When we first looked at switching to SIP trunking and deploying Lync as our corporate PBX, there were few other organisations in New Zealand that had made the transition," explains Dave. "While that puts us at the bleeding edge of new technologies, it does give access to the very latest functionality and ensures we are able to take advantage of new releases and advances for many years to come."

About House of Travel:

- Largest privately owned travel company in New Zealand
- 2,000 employees
- 75 House of Travel retail stores throughout New Zealand
- Founded in 1987

Cutting-edge communications

House of Travel operates under a joint venture business model, with Dave's team providing ICT services that support 1150 people across 80 sites, including retail stores, corporate division Orbit Travel, online sales and the central holdings company.

In 2013, he converged all of the business' IT and telecommunications contracts and negotiated a group solution that would deliver cost savings and allow them to quickly rollout new technologies.

"Voice Connect also provides diversity and redundancy options for business continuity. That's where Spark has added real value."

Rik Roberts, Solution Architect at House of Travel

Following a competitive tender, House of Travel renewed its voice, mobile and data services contract with Spark in January 2013, extending their long-standing relationship by another three years. It supplements an existing contract with Revera, part of Spark, for its data centre hosting in Christchurch and Auckland.

"Most of our stores have old PBXs with outdated functionality," explains Dave. "As each PBX comes to end of life, we are migrating our stores from ISDN to SIP and upgrading to Lync's IP PBX."

Voice Connect supports all the latest unified communications solutions and House of Travel chose Lync 2013 to align with its established Microsoft ecosystem.

House of Travel is an existing customer of Spark's managed data service, and so is saving time and money by using a single access circuit and router for both voice and data at each site.

Spark is migrating each store to a VDSL or fibre connection for increased bandwidth to accommodate the combined voice and multimedia traffic.

SIP simplifies

"There are many benefits from our move to SIP trunking and voice-enabled IP telephony," adds Rik Roberts, the Solution Architect at House of Travel leading the Lync rollout.

"By supporting voice, data and video over IP, a single SIP trunk replaces multiple TDM trunks and simplifies each store's voice architecture, saving money.

"Although the cost reductions do vary between sites, some have achieved massive savings of around 50 percent. A few of our sites have been cost neutral as their maintenance costs on ancient PBXs were minimal. However, these stores were still very keen to make the move as they could see the wider business benefits."

House of Travel conducted a pilot with a small North Island store in 2013, then switched over one of its larger Christchurch stores to Voice Connect.

"It was very easy and worked extremely well, despite call volumes increasing overnight from 100 to 1,200 calls per day. That was a true test of the technology, giving us the confidence that we'd selected the right blend of technologies," says Rik.

As new stores come on board, Voice Connect is quick and easy to pre-provision.

"Voice Connect has revolutionised our provisioning of new sites," adds Rik. "With only two circuits into each store, Spark can pre-provision it before we make the changeover, making it a fast and seamless process.

"Late last year, an old PBX at one of our stores suddenly failed and they lost all inbound and outbound calling capabilities. Working with Spark, we had a new voice system up and running within 30 minutes.

"It was a great team effort, with Spark pulling out all the stops to transfer to SIP so quickly. It really demonstrated the value of our new desktop environment and all-digital platform, and just how easy it now is to transition stores.

"If a connection fails due to an outage or some other disaster, the network has been configured to automatically failover between each Revera data centre, so that both inbound and outbound calls can continue uninterrupted."

Modern workspaces

In addition to the benefits of a centralised voice service, by selecting Spark as the provider of multiple services House of Travel requires fewer telephony supplier and maintenance contracts - saving time and money.

"One of the biggest benefits for our people is one-touch dialling," adds Dave. "In the past, they would have to look up each phone number and manually key it into their handset. With Lync 2013, they just click on a name to make a voice call, saving time and effort."

The stores appreciate the removal of clunky deskphones which have largely been replaced by wireless Bluetooth VoIP headsets for a more tidy and modern workspace.

"We've also been really pleased with Voice Connect call quality, with many stores saying that they're impressed with the clarity and sharper sound to voice calls."

In addition to voice and data, SIP trunking supports growing use of video across the organisation.

"This entire project began as a test for video conferencing between our two corporate sites," explains Dave. "We previously used a third party provider but it gave us limited control. Lync is now our preferred method for internal training via Lync group meetings. It's clear, reliable and integrates with all our desktop apps, such as Office and Sharepoint."

Choosing SIP trunking from Spark means choosing a people-centred solution that is simple, connected, flexible and secure.

If you're ready to create better connections for your customers, speak to your Client Manager or call us on:



0800 694 364

No stopping

By converging voice, data and video communications over a single network, House of Travel now has a more dynamic digital platform that significantly reduces infrastructure costs and increases agility.

With ten stores migrated by the end of 2013, and another dozen keen to transition, the pipeline is growing as the stores hear about the benefits of the new voice and unified communications platform.

"We met our target of migrating 100 users by the end of 2013, and expect to easily exceed our target of 350 users by the end of 2014"

Dave Veronese, CIO, House of Travel