

VoIP Winner

● Helping a school district use VoIP (voice over Internet Protocol) to improve student and faculty safety is key to this VAR's innovativeness.

by Jay McCall

When it comes to VoIP, a reseller can only survive so long by focusing solely on providing a dial tone and cheaper long distance than its competitors. What successful VARs understand is how to present important solutions and services that complement a VoIP installation. Pacific Western Technologies, Ltd. (PWT), the 2008 *Business Solutions Channel Innovator Award* winner for VoIP, exemplifies the kind of company that knows how to sell on value rather than price alone. One example that illustrates this company's business prowess is a recent install with the Franklin McKinley School District (FMSD), which comprises 16 campuses, including the district's administrative offices. FMSD supports more than 9,800 students in grades K-8, and it employs more than 1,000 teachers, administrators, and staff. The San Jose, CA-based school district has grown significantly over the past decade, but during that time its phone system and data network had become out-of-date, and it was becoming more difficult and costly to keep the networks up and running. FMSD sent out an RFP to several solutions providers, including PWT, which has an office in Santa Clara, CA.

During the RFP phase, PWT created an advantage over its competition in three ways: 1. The VAR proposed a converged solution that would enable FMSD to reduce the number of leased voice and data lines from 17 to 4, while adding functionality such as unified messaging, 4-digit dialing within the campuses, a multilanguage auto attendant, and E911 (enhanced 911) support. 2. PWT is an authorized E-Rate Service Provider, which enabled FMSD to utilize the solution in conjunction with the approved E-Rate funds to complete the VoIP project. (E-Rate is a federally funded government program that can financially assist schools with technology projects.) 3. PWT has six technicians who are 3Com-certified and who can provide predeployment network assessments, VoIP implementations, and postdeployment services (e.g. preventive maintenance, troubleshooting, remote monitoring).

After being awarded the contract, PWT replaced

more than 1,100 of FMSD's phones with 3Com NBX 3102 VoIP phones and upgraded the school district's phone network to a 3Com NBX platform. "We helped the school district understand how an IP-based phone system could leverage the school district's existing data infrastructure and bring all the campuses onto a common platform, enabling unified messaging [i.e. receiving voice mail as an e-mail attachment], auto attendant, and E911 functionality," says David Ricci, technical service manager at PWT. "Additionally, with the NBX solution's Web-based administrative tool, NBX NetSet, the school district's technicians could perform changes on their own, rather than relying on the local phone company and paying each time."



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particular campus," he says. "Working with the NBX NetSet software's call detail reporting, we created a customized database that interfaced with the local carrier E911 system to translate phone extensions into building locations. Now, if someone calls 911, the operator sees that the call is coming from FMSD Campus B, the address of the campus, as well as that the call is from someone in room 1 of building 8."

Creating the E911 database was the biggest challenge for the VAR because it included correlating each phone extension with its physical location and creating translation tables that put the data in the correct format for the local carrier's 911 operator. This required a few months of labor, including corresponding with the local emergency center and making adjustments.

Now that PWT understands how to build an E911 database, it will be much easier to repeat this process in the future. In fact, the VAR is already using this install to land a similar contract with another school district in its region. Overall, the FMSD project earned the PWT approximately \$300,000, plus ongoing maintenance fees. ●



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