

Helping Harlow College to deliver educational excellence

Case study – Harlow College



Harlow College in Essex has been rated by the UK government as the most successful college of its type in England, and has twice won the prestigious Association of Colleges' Beacon Award. Great communication and collaboration is essential to this, but Harlow College's phone system was holding them back. BT provided a solution that not only improved collaboration, but halved their costs too.

The challenge

Harlow College's hosted voice service was getting in the way of their work. It was expensive and offered limited functionality, phones weren't hands-free and it wasn't possible to hold an internal conference call. Dave Higgs – Harlow College's senior infrastructure engineer – asked his BT Local Business Team to propose a solution.

Case study profile

Harlow College, Essex
Education sector

Challenge

Replace an ageing hosted voice solution with a modern, flexible system that provides greater scope for collaboration and reduced costs.

Solution

A Mitel MiVoice-based phone system, combined with BT SIP Trunking provides scalable, flexible phone systems that save money and allow for instant collaboration between staff.

Products

BT-supplied Mitel 3300 Controllers running Mitel MiVoice Business software
BT SIP trunks with inclusive call package
BTnet internet access
ISDN30 digital lines
BT Business Broadband and PSTN services

The solution

“BT found they could provide a new communications platform, while halving our ongoing costs,” says Dave Higgs, “with a return on investment inside 3 years.” The solution was an end-to-end communications system, based on the Mitel MiVoice platform with BT SIP trunks.

By moving over to SIP trunks, Harlow College gained a fully-inclusive call package for a set monthly fee. ISDN30 lines were used for back-up, and standard exchange lines connected lifts, alarms and emergency phones. Business Broadband was used for CCTV and other operations, while BTnet leased lines gave the college fast and reliable internet access.

BT worked with Mitel to carry out the installation work. “The Mitel team were amazing and so helpful,” recalls Dave Higgs. “The transition went really well and the new system has been totally reliable.”

With SIP trunks, staff could keep their existing numbers to minimise disruption. BT also provides ongoing remote and on-site maintenance services, with second-line support from Mitel.

The result

BT’s end-to-end solution has improved efficiency at Harlow College and has given them a whole new set of tools to collaborate with. For example, incoming calls are now answered by an auto attendant, which steers them to the right department for better customer service. College employees have the benefit of voicemail facilities too, while multi-party conference calls can be set up in seconds for instant collaboration.

“The new solution has brought our communications facilities right up-to-date,” says Dave Higgs. “SIP trunking is an innovation. Voice quality is perfect and it’s much more cost effective. Our ongoing costs have halved, exactly as BT said they would.”

There are day-to-day operational efficiency benefits too. Moves and changes are straightforward with no more rewiring to do. “I can do almost everything from my desk,” says Dave, “and the Mitel management interface is superb. Everything’s so much more efficient.”

BT’s solution gives Harlow College scalability. During August, when vast numbers of calls from prospective students are received, it’s possible to temporarily increase the number of SIP trunks to cope with the additional call volume.

“We’re now considering other productivity benefits achievable with the new unified communications platform, like fixed mobile convergence for more flexible working,” Dave concludes.

“I can do almost everything from my desk, and the Mitel management interface is superb. Everything’s so much more efficient.”

Dave Higgs,
Senior Infrastructure Engineer,
Harlow College

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