

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

George Peck

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

VP

Last updated: 2009 Jul 21



Product(s): CPE: Shortel, LD: Switched, One Flex: Integrated Access
Industry: Government, Marketing/Research

1. Business need

"Well, our business need was driven first of all by a big move. We were moving; we wanted to upgrade our equipment, so we needed upgraded equipment. We were, like most relatively small businesses--and we have about 12 people in the office--we had to have something that was cost effective, and we also understood that we needed to move ahead technologically.

At Chamber, you think we're only involved with just picking up the telephone and answering things, but we in fact have a lot of different membership that has a lot of different needs and we need to be right up there with our membership--so we were looking at technological issues, we were looking at cost issues, and then we were looking at somebody that could help us, a non-technical organization, get something done."

2. Evaluation & selection

"Well, when we were looking for an upgrade--because we definitely needed to do that--we put out an RFP and asked some people to give us some ideas about how we could upgrade the equipment we had; we had 15-year-old equipment at the time. We asked the folks for some ideas about reliability. One of the things that we don't want is downtime, so we needed something very, very reliable; we needed something that was relatively simple to use. None of us are technicians in the Chamber, so we needed something that we could very quickly adapt to. And of course, being a small business, it was important for us to keep the costs down.

We had about three people that responded to our RFP and we had our management team, which is me and two others--the boss and myself and the person who uses the phones the most, the receptionist--all sit down and we asked the people to come in, sit down, and talk to us about what they could offer us, and then we took that information and their packages that they left--lots of glossy pictures and exciting things--and then tried to bore down to the particular needs that we had."

3. Why Qwest?

"Well, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce essentially chose Qwest and ShoreTel for a couple of reasons. Number one, we had an established relationship with Qwest, and that works very strongly in their favor because we had--we'd worked successfully with them in the past, so it's like having a relative in the family; you feel a little more comfortable that way.

Qwest also came into us with a variety of packages rather than coming in and saying 'Here's what you've got; take it or leave it.' Instead, they gave us some different approaches to solving some of the problems that we had, and one of the organizations they brought in to talk to us was ShoreTel. A combination of the established relationship with Qwest, the approach that ShoreTel took--they understood what it takes to meet the needs of a small business--those two things, I think, probably were the most important to us and helped us make that decision.

Well, when I talk about different ideas, they--you know, Qwest has relationships with a lot of different organizations, so they brought us essentially three different packages. One was a top-end, high-tech kind of package; it was pretty expensive, but it offered a great deal in terms of ability to expand and do some things that we didn't, we found later in discussing it--that we didn't really need to do. One of the organizations came in to us with sort of like the cafeteria plan--you know, one of these and one of those and one of those--and by the time we added up what the needs were that we had, that also pretty much put that out of our reach. And then ShoreTel

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

George Peck

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

VP

Last updated: 2009 Jul 21



came in and said 'Okay, we understand small businesses and we're new partners with Qwest. Here's a package we can develop for you.' And that turned out to be the ideal package."

4. The implementation/installation

"When we talk about how does it all work--how do we implement the plan? We now have--we've now made that contract with Qwest and ShoreTel, and now comes the hard part. You have all these pieces of wire and phones and technicians all running around. Well, the implementation in fact, I was most concerned about, but in fact it was probably the smoothest part of the whole thing. We were moving into a brand new facility, which meant we kind of built it from the ground up, and what we--we already had an IT consultant because we not only had to do phones, we also had to integrate our computer system and upgrade that at the same time. And what I was most happy about is all the techies came in and were talking about my IT contractor--me, who doesn't know much but enough to get in trouble, the Qwest people, and ShoreTel people, we all met and started to work on building the system that we wanted, and I was amazed at how smoothly it went. First of all, techies can talk to techies, but they were all good enough people to turn around and translate to me. So there were people who spoke Geek, and they were speaking Geek back and forth to each, but there were also a couple of guys in there that can speak Geek and translate it to English, and they would talk to me. And the crew was excellent; they were very customer-oriented. Anytime you're doing something from the ground up, there's little things you didn't think about, and they were superb at helping me understand 'Okay, here's a couple options as we're building. Is this where you really want your port for this particular thing?' 'Uhh, no, because that's gonna be sitting right in front of the desk.' So the actual implementation of our plan actually went much smoother than I had anticipated.

The timeline that we were working to was a pretty short one because one of the things that was very important to us at the Chamber is that we have minimum downtime. We'd worked very hard to make sure all the move went very smoothly; now how do you integrate the technical side of a move into a place? We were able to do, because of the good planning--and I had a lot of support from both the Qwest and the ShoreTel people giving me some ideas about 'Have you thought about--?' beforehand, so by the time we came to the plan of putting things into place, we had that down to a one-day exercise, and in fact we were able to put the whole thing together in just about a day. And our downtime, by the time they--when we through the switch from our old system to the new system was probably--maybe eight minutes.

One thing that's important: When you're with a small Chamber and you're a small business person and you have something that you need to talk to the Chamber about, you want to talk to them right now, and we didn't lose anybody as a consequence of the move."

5. Overview of solution

"One of the nice things about Qwest was that they provided us a package; it was a bundle. And I've seen this on TV--you know, bundle your package and everything works better. Well, I hadn't given that much thought, but when we started putting all of the pieces together at the Chamber, I discovered that in fact we did have a bundle. We upgraded our lines to T1 lines; we went to dedicated long distance using voice over IP; we were able to work with Qwest to integrate our entire computer system. And one of the things that was very important to us--we built our facility to accept Wi-Fi; to become a Wi-Fi hotspot--and this has become very important to us because it's amazing how many people who come to the Chamber and want to do work there bring their computers with them and they can plug in and immediately connect up to the Internet. So that was a very important part of things.

We have a great deal of flexibility in the office space as well; we have 20 ports, so there isn't any place that if we have to, we can't plug in phone or computers. We have a great data distribution system going there.

Qwest also helped us integrate our system--the phone system from ShoreTel with the 230 and 560 instruments and the computer system that we have, so everything talks to everything. They also showed us how we could take advantage of

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

George Peck

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

VP

Last updated: 2009 Jul 21



this package to actually drive down some of our costs. So we chose to use the 230 and 560 phone systems from ShoreTel; we had 20 ports scattered around the area, both data ports and phone ports, making sure those were all in the right place. From a technical point of view, it didn't seem to be terribly difficult, but the most important thing is it all worked as quickly as we were able to put it together."

6. Customer service

"Our support has been excellent on both sides of the house, both the Qwest folks and ShoreTel folks--the Qwest, of course, taking care of all of the technical issues. We haven't had any technical issues; nonetheless, I've gotten phone calls on a very regular basis from the folks that I worked with saying 'Okay George, how are things working?' 'Well, obviously they're working pretty well because you and I are talking; I'm not screaming at you.' We have not had any technical problems, so I haven't had to have anybody come back in. The ShoreTel people, the instruments have all worked wonderfully. We had some excellent training. The one thing that--you're feeding from a fire hose when you have a whole new system, so one of the things that I need to do is go back to the folks at ShoreTel and say 'Okay, we had the initial training; can we start all over again and--there's a lot of stuff that we've forgotten; there's a lot of capability that I know is there--it's somewhere in the back of my head; I don't know how to get to it. Let's talk about it a little bit more.' And the people that I've talked with at ShoreTel have been tremendous so I don't anticipate we'll have any problem on that."

7. Non-financial benefits

"Non-financially, a number of benefits. First of all, we have a much more reliable system than we had before. Because it's upgradable, we also have more confidence in the system--we know that in the future we can grow it as we need to grow it, and we know that things are turning over very rapidly in the technology area, so we want to be on that leading edge just like all of our members try to be, so that's very important to us.

It's also nice having a new system because the staff isn't embarrassed about the phone system. And that sounds kind of silly, but having a first-class system available for the staff makes them happy as well, and they know also that it's a first-class system and that they have some opportunities to grow in the future in the manner in which they do business--that's been very important to us.

In addition, with a bundled package we know that we only have one person we need to talk to; that gives us a sense of comfort, knowing that there's only one person we need to talk to if we have any kind of problems with any of the technology we're involved with, and that's Qwest. And Qwest has been so good in responding to us--that gives us a great deal of confidence in the system that we have."

8. Measurable benefits

"Well, it's a little early to tell. We've only had the system in for a little while, but we've seen a couple of things. Number one, one of the things we set up was an ability to teleconference from our main conference rooms. And we've had a couple of occasions--one due to weather and two just due to trying getting all the people together--where instead of having a meeting at the office, we've had a teleconference, and we have not really done that before. So we've saved people time; we've saved people probably a little bit of money because they don't have to travel to the Chamber from someplace else.

In terms of our telephone costs, I haven't seen a great deal of change, although on the first bill it looks like we're driving down our telephone costs to the tune of about 200 dollars a month with this bundling; instead of having all of these various charges that add up very quickly, now we're driving some of those costs down with this new technology to the tune of about 200 dollars a month."

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

George Peck

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

VP

Last updated: 2009 Jul 21



9. Areas for improvement

"You know, when you sit down and go through this whole process, you anticipate problems. I haven't had any problems. I can say I haven't had any problems yet; I don't really anticipate that. The system all seems to be working extremely well together. I'm getting follow-ups; if I have a problem, I'm probably gonna get a call about it before I have a chance to call somebody. So in terms of my Qwest support, it's been there when I needed it. The toughest thing for me, quite frankly, is to read the bills. They came in--happily, the bills were lower than they'd been before, and I think that goes to this whole bundling sort of thing, but I have actually--the one phone call that I have made back to the Qwest folks is 'Tell me what this line means and where it fits in in my overall package.' So from a technical point of view, no problems. But like just about every customer, sometimes that 15-page bill is a little hard to read.

So when I was having problems reading the bill, I called my Qwest rep; he said I'll be right over; it's easier for me to go over it with you at your desk than on the phone. He came over, went over it line item by line item and suddenly it all became crystal clear--for about 10 minutes. It's nice knowing, though, when I have a question, they're right there ready to answer it for me, and if it's only the bill that I'm gonna have a problem with--and it certainly wasn't the bottom line part of the bill; it was 'What do all these lines mean?' And those questions were answered for me."

10. Future plans

"Well, one of the nice things about having this relationship with Qwest and ShoreTel and a new system is that we know we have a system that can grow. The Chamber recently won an award for workplace flexibility; I'd like to take that to the next level and give our people the opportunity to work off site when they need to, and we have the flexibility to grow our system so we can do that--for one thing, connecting in with individual cell phones, computers, and so on.

The other thing I would like to do in the long term is look at video conferencing. Teleconferencing is nice, but it works so much better when you're looking at somebody and getting their expression. So as our budget allows and as the technology moves ahead, we anticipate that's an area that we'd like to go into as well."

11. Recommendations and advice

"Well, as a non-technician who was faced with rebuilding our system, let me give a little advice to some of the folks out there that may find themselves in exactly the same place. First of all, start planning early; that was tremendously important, and I was able to get people--we were able to put together a team with the Qwest and the ShoreTel people well in advance of the actual go-live date. So they were able to help a non-technical person plan for a technical event, and I think that's very important.

The other thing you need to do when you're dealing with technology is don't be afraid to pin down somebody who's a techie--say 'What does that mean?'--because they will throw terms out, they will throw features out to you that you have no idea what they're talking about. They don't mind explaining them to you; sometimes you're just a little embarrassed because you don't know all these things. I got over that real quick and it really helped me a lot. First of all, I learned a great deal about the technological capabilities of the system, but it also helped me put together a better package. So I would say plan early and then make sure that you follow up on your training. One of the things when you're building a whole new system is you're so concentrated on the technology of the thing and getting everything in place, they give you some training and it goes--right over your head. You pick up little bits and pieces, enough so that you can do the basic system; then once the day-to-day activities start, back up again. You say 'I know something--I can do something with my system, but I don't know what it is.' So do some follow-up training--it's very important."