

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

Tracy Hippensteel

Construction 70

Contracts Administrator

Last updated: 2008 Nov 24



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**Product(s): CPE: Nortel - BCM 50 (Business Communications Manager)**  
**Industry: Construction**

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## 1. Business need

"Initially, our phone system was about seven or eight years old, and we were sort of married to the vendor. Every time we had a changeover in personnel or needed to move a phone, we had to call them to come out and reprogram names and extension numbers, and it was pretty much a constant headache in managing that system--so that was probably the big catalyst to get us to start looking around and to find out what was available out there.

Because of the old technology that our existing phone system had us shackled with, there were a lot of things that we weren't able to do that were pretty standard in the industry at that time; simple things like being able to transfer a phone call to an extension in an office, to be able to transfer it to a cell phone, or even a home phone if I had a project manager or somebody that was working from home for that day. The old technology just absolutely was prohibitive and wouldn't let us do that. But we needed to have that flexibility because our workload was expanding in an ever-growing area and a lot of our project managers we wouldn't see for a day or two because the projects that they were working on or reviewing would prohibit them from being able to see the project and drive into the office within an eight or a ten-hour period. So we needed to have a little more flexibility about being able to get calls to our people that were out in the field."

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## 2. Evaluation & selection

"We wanted to have some flexibility in managing the system in-house because every time we had a new face or had to move an extension or something like that, we wanted to be able to manage that hardware configuration in-house.

We also needed to have some flexibility in being able to contact our people, having them be able to contact not only the office, but just simple tasks like being able to check your voicemail without having to go through an elaborate number of key punches and special characters.

We didn't have a wide selection process in place; we limited it to two or three systems and pretty much a couple days into the evaluation process realized that things hadn't changed much. Technology was pretty much standard throughout most of the phone systems; there might be a little benefit here or a little benefit there, but it was going to boil down to the fact that who was going to be the guy that was supporting it for us? And that was probably a big part of what our selection criteria was, was who's going to be there when it doesn't work?

Our process for selecting the phone system was pretty much informal. We knew what we had been wrestling with with the old system and wanted to find something to improve those aggravations. The whole process we probably were able to complete within a 30-day period."

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## 3. Why Qwest?

"We've had Qwest as a service provider for probably 15 or 16 years, and in that time frame, they've been a constant in our business. Anytime that we've had any challenges or new business needs, we've always been able to contact somebody there that can sort of guide us through some of the options and systems that were available to us to fill those needs. So we figure that if these people have been with us this long, they're probably on top of what's going on as far as phone systems are concerned and can probably bring a wealth of information into the conversation as we were going through the evaluation process."

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## 4. The implementation/installation

"Well, the implementation of the system actually started back in the discussion phase with my Qwest sales rep. I was involved in the aggravations of the old system, so I had a whole shopping list of questions to ask and my sales rep went through and answered all of my questions. So at the tail end of the evaluation process, we had worked out probably 85 percent of the challenges that we felt may be in our way in getting the new system implemented.

Once those questions were answered and out of the way, the physical hardware implementation was a breeze. I mean, I was amazed at how quickly we transferred 35 phones from the old system to the new system. It was probably a five or six-hour process and everything was done. I mean, it was well thought out, well planned, and I was just really amazed at how quickly and how smoothly everything went.

The training that was involved actually came in two or three processes. There was sort of a dry walk-through training a week or so before the system was even installed; it was sort of a preview of what was to come. Part of the training involved explaining to us what the changeover scenario would look like; the fact of removing all the old equipment, installing all the new equipment, what kind of downtimes there would be involved there. And then once that was out of the way, then we actually started talking about the new system and how we were going to interact with the new system. And then the third part of that was after the system was installed, we had a trainer on site that was actually working with everybody; as their unit was installed and turned on, a trainer went in and sat with them and walked them through voice-mail and the features of the system and all of that sort of thing. So the training was like same day. It was pretty incredible."

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## 5. Overview of solution

"I have a T1 for my voice phone and I also have a T1 for my data in our main location in Phoenix. The Nortel equipment that we had installed through Qwest is their BCM 50 unit; it's sort of a midrange business phone system. We have probably 32 T7316 phone sets and then I think we have some 7308s, which have less features; they're in common areas--waiting rooms, conference rooms, those sort of things. I think our system provides service to just under 40 individual handsets; that would be private offices and common area phones."

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## 6. Customer service

"After the installation, the sales rep at Qwest called me two or three times to see if everything's going okay, to see if any questions popped up, see if there's anything else that we need to do to expand or tweak or change the existing system--and that reinforced that we had made the right decision to go with this system and to use Qwest as the provider to do that.

The installation process was equally satisfying because the individuals that came out to actually do the hardware installation and the software programming and training were just as interested in making the transition as smooth as possible and making sure that when they walked out the door at the end of that day, we were comfortable to be able to operate the new equipment that they had just installed.

We changed over phone systems, so naturally it's not going to go 100 percent as planned. It looked real good on paper, but when you get into the actual implementation, there are always situations that come up, and this installation was no different. But the responsiveness of the Qwest staff to deal with, work through, and remedy these problems was just incredible. It reinforced the fact that we had made the right choice and had the right people out here doing the work for us."

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## 7. Non-financial benefits

"Some of the immediate benefits that come to mind are just the efficiency at which we contact clients--and employees as far as that goes. The old system that we had was extremely proprietary, extremely limiting, and we found that we have quite a bit of flexibility with the new system. Basic things like being able to transfer a phone call that comes in to our front desk to the cell phone of a project manager who's 50 miles away standing in the middle of a subdivision. We couldn't have even thought about that with the old system, and now they're all programmed in on speed keys that if they happen to be out of the office, we transfer the call and the caller actually doesn't have any idea that they're not sitting in their office. So the efficiency by which we do business with this new system is really noticed by everybody that uses it.

Being able to return messages--that was one of the features I didn't even know the system had. When I get a voice-mail message, it gives me a selection that I can either erase it, I can reply to it, or I can send it to somebody else that may be able to deal with it a little quicker than I can. The 'reply' button is kind of unique because I don't have to look up the number; I hit 'reply' and it calls back the number that came in. There are just little things where you save 30 seconds here or a minute there, but at the end of the day and a lot of phone calls and those sort of things, it really does add up and the productivity actually goes up as a result of that."

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## 8. Measurable benefits

"The most immediate measurable benefit from the Nortel solution that Qwest installed for us is the financial end of it. I had to transfer some phone numbers from an old location that we had that had sort of become our main phone number; I had to have that phone number transferred over to our new location and had been doing that for about the last ten years. The price that we were paying to have that done was pretty exorbitant, but now that we have the T1 system, the newer technology, being able to transfer that over seamlessly has improved.

Bottom line is that our phone bill each month has actually gone down with the new system, with the T1, with the more efficient way of transferring numbers from other prefixes. That's probably the most obvious benefit that we've found. The percentage of savings that we're realizing is probably somewhere between 10 and 12 percent.

The new system is a lot easier to manage. One of the considerations when we had to move personnel around or when we brought new personnel in was we would sort of gang them together and make two or three moves and bring somebody in so that when we had to call the other company to come in to our proprietary system and make changes, we were getting our money's worth for the service call that we were paying for. Things are done now on the fly and we don't even think about them. Somebody needs to change offices--it's no problem. We can go in, change the extension, change the names on the phone, change the presets--all of those sort of things--and we're doing it. We're actually in control of our phone system and that's sort of a new concept for us.

In the past, very simple moves would be a day or two of planning. With the new Nortel system, we have an interface that I can actually access the system itself from my desktop computer. There's a GUI interface and you click on this icon and click on this icon and do this and do this and the change is made and it's saved and the system's updated--and again, I can do that in the amount of time that it used to take me to make the phone call to schedule the third-party vendor in to do it."

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## 9. Areas for improvement

"I'm not sure that they could have improved on much. I'm sure that this wasn't an extremely large installation for them--you know, we're talking about 35 to 40 phones and a basic business installation. As smoothly as everything went, I don't know how they could have done it any faster, done it any better, done it any more efficiently. Everybody had voice-mail set up and knew how to answer and transfer and do all of the basic things on a phone system

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that was probably 180 degrees from the phone system that we got rid of. And I can only attribute that to the fact that this wasn't their first time at the rodeo; they had been through this, they knew how to get customers up and running as effortlessly as possible, and I'm really not sure that they could have done anything to improve it."

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## 10. Future plans

"At this point, we've just come through quite a bit of growth. We just upgraded from a 640k DSL connection to the Internet to a T1 in our computer room, and we've just upgraded our phone system from an antiquated, technologically-limiting system to the Nortel system attached to another T1 for our voice. We're actually still experiencing the benefits of those two changes. To be able to look into the future and say 'We're going to add this' and 'We're going to add that'--I'm not even sure how many benefits we've added with the last two changes, so at this point, we're actually still growing into both of those systems and realizing some of the benefits of those decisions."

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## 11. Recommendations and advice

"Have a well-defined list of wants and needs. Sit down and talk those through thoroughly. Find out how this need is going to be met and with what system is it going to be met. Is it a two-step process? Is it a four-step process? And how are you dealing with it now? Are you even able to deal with it now? I found out that when I talked to my sales rep with that long list of questions that I initially had, when I had worked through all of those and all of those questions were answered, it was sort of a no-brainer. I mean, the decision was pretty much made for me that if this system could answer all of these challenges and do them in an efficient manner, it was obviously the system that I needed to install."