

# Case Study

**ASKO: VoIP efficiencies drive cost savings, competitive advantage and organisational efficiencies.**

## The Customer

Started in Scandinavia nearly a century ago, ASKO Appliances has grown to become one of the world's leading producers of quality household appliances.

The ASKO range – including high performance washers, dryers and dishwashers -- is sold in more than 30 countries around the world. ASKO Appliances employs over 1000 people worldwide and in Australia employs more than 70 staff across five offices nationally.

As an international brand that prides itself on quality, performance and design, the company realised the importance of upgrading its existing, outdated telephone systems, to a new, integrated VoIP solution that would unify the organisation, ensure cost savings and help them grow the business even further.

## The Problem

Faced with five different key telephone systems of various makes, manufacturers and models in each of their state offices, ASKO realised that a new communication solution was required to help them



Peter Smith  
Chief Financial Officer  
ASKO Appliances

streamline business processes and communicate more effectively with staff and customers.

According to Peter Smith, Chief Financial Officer of ASKO Appliances, the use of five separate systems was proving difficult to manage - severely hampering the organisation's efficiency.

"The disparate system was extremely costly, not only with the additional costs associated with the maintenance of five separate systems, but also with exceptionally high call costs between offices," Smith said.

For an organisation that prides themselves on customer relationships however, even more worrying for ASKO were the delays and inefficiencies the system was causing in dealing with customers.

"As the various systems weren't compatible with each other, we couldn't have a call centre for customer service and we had no knowledge of how many customer calls were coming in, who was dealing with them and how they were being resolved."

ASKO also realised the need to address the lack of functionality of the old system, such as only half the sites having access to voicemail.

As a result, ASKO decided on implementing one integrated VoIP solution that would deliver:

- a centralised contact centre;
- efficient management of information regarding customer calls;
- reduction in call costs with more efficient call routing; and
- greater functionality such as a centralised unified messaging system.



Peter Smith and Leah Giannini from ASKO using the new VoIP system

After tendering for service providers through ASKO appointed consultants, Richard Craig Consultants and IPL Consulting, NEC Business Solutions and partner, PABX Sales and Service were appointed to develop the solution.

## The Solution

Following a detailed assessment of ASKO's needs, the NEC team were able to migrate the organisation to one centralised VoIP network – distributed throughout Australia – allowing for enhanced functionality such as centralised unified messaging and a distributed contact centre.

The new system comprises an NEC VoIP telephony solution, using the NEAX 2000 IPS (Internet Protocol Server) as the Enterprise Communications Platform. The central IPS was installed at head office in Victoria and then a remote distributed module (DMR) was implemented at each site.

NEC partner Zeacom worked to provide the Unified Messaging and Contact Centre Solution through the Corus and Q-Master products respectively.

NEC also utilised Layer 3 Power over Ethernet (POE) Switches from Enterasys, to provide for the NEC Dterm IP handsets. The WAN was provided by Uecomm.

The system was project managed and installed by PABX Sales and Service, who also had responsibility for training each of ASKO's 70 employees individually.

The team also built a proof of concept and staged the delivery off-site at NEC Business Solutions, prior to deploying it on site. The solution was

then able to be demonstrated to ASKO, assisting with a relatively seamless and trouble-free deployment.

## The Benefits

The new VoIP system has revolutionised communications at ASKO, with the company now having one centralised system, which unites the national team - – regardless of geography.

The system also enables the least call routing – a feature which automatically selects the best and cheapest carrier route available for a call, at any time of day.

“From a cost perspective, the system is already providing huge benefits for ASKO, particularly as the company’s largest types of calls are inter-site calls and these are now completely free,” said Smith.

“We estimate that we are saving around \$5,000 per month, on inter-site calls alone – at this rate the system will pay for itself in no time.

Importantly, the new solution has also enabled ASKO to have a dedicated call centre for customers, allowing them to track the number of calls that are being received, and manage them accordingly.

“The NEC solution greatly adds to our competitive advantage,” said Smith.

“Unquestionably we are now better equipped to manage customer communications.”

“We now know when our busy or slow times are and can allocate appropriate resources. We can also ensure calls are being answered by the best possible division, quickly and efficiently.”

“From a management perspective, the solution has changed the way we operate – making us more efficient and giving us a greater understanding of customers. For these reasons alone – the system is invaluable,” said Smith.

Staff throughout the company are also reaping the benefits that the solution’s increased functionality provides, including an integrated voicemail solution, one centralised address book, conference calls and call forwarding. Access to an employee’s usual extension profiles when they are traveling interstate, has also added real value.

“The desktop functionality is extremely user-friendly and has provided staff with the best possible tools to do their job,” Smith added.

“We were also impressed at the level of training provided to each employee– something that was particularly important given the technology was a radical shift for many of them.”

The new solution has also positioned the Australian team extremely highly with ASKO’s global organisation and Australia has become a model for the introduction of VoIP internationally.

“Throughout the whole process, the team provided complete transparency and answered all our questions, resulting in a relatively seamless implementation,” Smith said.

“In a nutshell, the new system has added enormous value to our organisation – providing us with an efficient and seamless network with branch offices, all while enhancing our competitive advantage, improving our organisational efficiency and saving costs,” he said.

## Problem

- Five disparate key telephone systems in different state offices across Australia.
- Separate systems proved to be costly and inefficient.
- The system also didn't allow for a call centre or a centralised network, hampering the organisation's ability to deal efficiently with customers.

## Solution

One centralised VoIP network based on:

- NEAX 2000 IPS (Internet Protocol Server) as the Enterprise Communications Platform.
- Corus and Q-Master provided the Unified Messaging and Contact Centre Solution respectively.
- Layer 3 switches provided by Enterasys.

## Benefits

- Huge reduction in costs, for example: inter-site calls are now free, resulting in a saving of around \$5000 per month on these types of calls alone.
- ASKO now has a centralised call centre resulting in efficient and smooth handling of customers.
- Heightened awareness of customer contact has also enabled the re-engineering of business processes for greater efficiencies and enhanced competitive advantage.
- Increased functionality, such as centralised unified messaging, address book, conference calls and call waiting.
- Implementation managed smoothly, with all staff given one-on-one training to ensure confidence in the new system.

### About NEC Business Solutions

NEC Business Solutions Ltd provides voice, data and video solutions for business and government. The company uses its expertise in Internet-based telephony, contact centres and managed services, and strong partnerships with other leading companies to creatively and affordably solve business problems.

NEC Business Solutions employs 750 staff nationally, and is a wholly owned subsidiary of NEC Australia.

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Peter Smith, CFO, ASKO