

## UNIVERGE SV9500 Communications Platform

# Knott's Berry Farm Hotel



## Customer

- Knott's Berry Farm Hotel

## Industry

- Hospitality

## Challenges

- System and voice platforms long past end of life
- High cost of failing system components
- No connectivity to support Unified Communications
- Lack of contact center metrics or caller information
- No networked call flow or system back-up

## Solution

- UNIVERGE® SV9500 platform
- UCE Contact Center suite of applications
- UC Agent (UC700) desktop client
- Unified Messaging System (UNIVERGE UM4730)
- Automatic Call Distribution (UC ACD) for routing
- Global Navigator (GNAV) Pro Client Supervisor

## Results

- Cost effective migration, leveraging past investments
- Increased contact center productivity and efficiency
- Enhanced communications, Mobility, and Messaging
- Improved staffing with smart contact center tools
- Enhanced guest experience, with reduced hold times

Located in Buena Park, California, Knott's Berry Farm Resort Hotel ("Knott's Hotel") is the on-site hotel near the world famous amusement park destination, Knott's Berry Farm. Knott's Berry Farm (KBF) is a part of Cedar Fair Entertainment Company, one of the largest regional amusement-resort operators in the world.

"Knott's Berry Farm" is actually home to three entities: the Knott's Berry Farm Theme Park, the adjacent Knott's Berry Farm Hotel, and nearby Knott's "Soak City" Water Park. Knott's Berry Farm theme park began as an Old West experience with authentic Ghost Town area. This was expanded with roller coasters and other rides, as well as restaurants, award-winning entertainment shows, and a variety of interesting shops, some of which distribute proprietary Knott's Berry Farm products. The Knott's "Soak City" water park is directly across the street from the Hotel property, which was acquired and renovated by KBF for the convenience of their guests.

The Knott's Berry Farm Hotel, steps away from the park entrance, is both a stand-alone hospitality experience as well as part of the Knott's Berry Farm total entertainment package. This 320-room hotel property offers its guests a "home away from home", and also a specially designed family-friendly wing featuring the "Peanuts" comic strip characters, a merchandise franchise exclusive to Cedar Fair Entertainment.

In addition to comfortable guest room accommodations, the Knott's Berry Farm Hotel offers the largest convention and meeting rooms in the area, a professional event planning staff, spacious ballrooms, on-site catering, a large outdoor pool area, Knott's Berry Farm gift shop, and a casual bar and grill restaurant.

According to the hotel GM, Don Prescott, "Our mission here is simply to make sure our guests have fun. Many families save up all year to come here, so we want them to have the best possible guest experience—from our service and amenities, to the technology side of their stay."

The Knott's Hotel call center books guest accommodations at the resort hotel. Guests may also book individual passes, group tickets, or full vacation packages, either online or with the staff, and may also contact a sales team that handles catered events. All Knott's Hotel business operations are on site, in the Buena Park location.

“This solution allows for future expansion, and with technology moving so fast, we have to keep up. It’s what our guests expect.”

## Challenges

Of major concern was the aging of the legacy communication system, as NEC’s UNIVERGE NEAX 2400 IPX and voice messaging platforms had far exceeded their end of life. The system had served them well in the past, but could no longer meet the requirements of the call center operations, the hotel’s mobile personnel, and guest services. The existing system’s functionality was basic, without Caller ID, Mobility, call center features, or Unified Messaging. Staff operations were managed without the ability to view and listen to voice messages within their email platform. The existing systems also functioned separately from Knott’s Park communications, without connectivity to support a Unified Communications experience for management, agents, or guests.

One of the hotel’s concerns with the old system was lack of information for the reservations personnel; they did not know who was calling, or what aspect of Knott’s Berry Farm the callers were interested in. “We couldn’t watch the call volumes,” said Prescott, “or know when the calls come in, or see who is calling from where.” Without reporting or a sense of peak patterns to gauge call volumes, it was also challenging to appropriately staff Reservations. Mr. Prescott added, “A lack of call information can lead to dropped calls--and once you lose a guest, you’re losing revenue. When they call and we book their stay, we want a positive first impression--for our guests to be excited about the hotel before they even arrive.”

During the investigative phase, Knott’s executives met and shared system requirements specific to their operations. Then began an extensive search for the right solution for all. Claudette Vogelsang, Knott’s VP of Finance and IT, stated, “The hotel is unique, so its General Manager was a key stakeholder in the process. Recognizing that the hotel is clearly a stand-alone business as well as a part of our organization, they have specific needs that were critical in our final decision.”



Some hotel challenges considered were related to Housekeeping operations and room turnover efficiency. Mr. Prescott shared, “Housekeeping was having to deal with an aging system that was unable to keep up with tasking communications, and so, in order to turn a room, our Housekeeping staff often had to physically go find the room inspector.”

The Hotel also required: a more powerful UC solution, one that could fully network with the other KBF properties going forward; a more robust contact center solution with application support, and the ability to manage call flows between the properties; ease of communication for a mobile “staff-on- the-go” was needed. The new system should provide management tools for the contact center, assist staff during peak seasons, improve the booking experience by reducing hold times for callers, and provide a good experience for hotel guests.

System scalability was critical to Knott’s Berry Farm Hotel, to allow for possible future expansion, however an added consideration was the interest in leveraging continued use of some of the existing legacy equipment wherever possible. It was also important to Knott’s Hotel to be able to deploy IP Telephony in key areas to support management and staff, as well as hotel guests, with enhanced feature functionality. The new system must have the ability to support Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), to reduce carrier costs and facilitate the more enhanced services.

Essentially, Knott’s Berry Farm was challenged with the decision to either completely replace the hotel’s aged system, or to opt for a system upgrade by migrating to a platform that could be integrated with existing technology to fully support the more enhanced functionality and improved overall performance that Knott’s Hotel operations required.

## Solution

After conducting due diligence with many comparisons and demos, Knott’s Berry Farm chose a system migration to the powerful NEC UNIVERGE SV9500 platform, a smart enterprise solution which supports a full suite of applications, promotes business agility, and enables smooth communications for the contact center, internal business office departments, between the three properties, and also enhances the guest experience. The hotel’s system upgrade included a UNIVERGE SV9500 platform, in a CCIS network, specifically serving the on-property resort hotel, yet networked with the Park’s same upgrade.

For this migration, the ability to integrate the new system with existing architecture delivered the most cost effective, efficient choice for the entire operation. Past investments were leveraged, with most NEC PIM



cards re-chipped and repurposed for the deployment of the UNIVERGE SV9500 platform. The VoIP deployment allowed for a single cable plant and LAN network to serve both voice and data applications.

A major deployment change for the Hotel's contact center was the implementation of NEC's UC Attendant for Hospitality. This was a successful transition for the hotel—from the old PBX Console to a modern, application-driven, desktop-based call processing solution. The UC Attendant not only provides call processing, but also presence-enabled directory and skills-based directory search—and Wake Up calls scheduling through an easy to use interface.

The Knott's Berry Farm Hotel cutover was simplified by the fact that NEC's UNIVERGE SV9500 and all applications and instrumentation could be deployed side by side to the existing legacy NEC NEAX 2400 IPX.

Mr. Prescott explained, "Here at the Hotel, we had an older NEC system for reservations which had been reliable for so many years. It was just outdated—but the infrastructure was in place, so we could basically overlay the old system with the new NEC platform. It was a painless operation to upgrade to the new system." Knott's Berry Farm's IT Director, Bill Grissom, added, "The switchover was done after hours, and the transition was flawless."

NEC's UNIVERGE UM4730 unified messaging solution with added Hospitality feature was also deployed and integrated with the hotel's current PMS (Property Management System). Specifically designed for the hospitality industry, the UM4730 with Hospitality feature set combines communications features into a state-of-the-art system that offers a complete unified messaging solution to improve guest services and enhance staff effectiveness and efficiency. Since UM4730 with Hospitality easily integrates with more than 60 property management systems (PMS), it provides the flexibility needed for hospitality properties. Prescott confirmed, "The integration with our PMS (Opera) was actually done flawlessly as well."

The Hotel now shares a single Unified Messaging system (UNIVERGE UM4730) with the Park for voicemail and Automated Attendant service for all departments, deployed in an extremely cost effective virtualized environment.

Connectivity and sharing resources across both properties was established by utilizing their existing fiber, also providing a back-up for both locations, an effective and low cost disaster recovery solution.

This upgrade also included migrating the hotel Administration to IP handsets, and all guest rooms were provided new handsets with Knott's

Berry Farm art and branding.

The implementation of UC Automatic Call Distribution (CallCenterWorX®-ACD) was critical to smooth call routing. This UC for Enterprise Contact Center Suite application smartly manages incoming call flows, and call routing between the Hotel and Park call centers. UC ACD answers the call, gives a message to the caller, and places the call in queue to a particular set of agents, ensuring the call center's efficiency and presenting a positive first impression for guests.

For Knott's Hotel's contact center, NEC's UC Agent (UNIVERGE UC700) was deployed to increase productivity with its enhanced call center functionality unified with UC capabilities. By providing specific ACD call queue and split information directly to agents' desktops, together with instant messaging, group chat, video conferencing and collaboration with colleagues, UC Agent enables agents to work with callers more responsively and efficiently.

Knott's Hotel's Reservations Manager and PBX Administrator, Rodney Toves, welcomed Global Navigator (GNAV) Pro Client Supervisor as an important addition for their contact center operations. "GNAV gives us visibility to agent activity," Said Toves, "and it effectively monitors the call traffic levels and provides detailed metrics reporting to simplify staff management."

Mr. Prescott commented on one of the deciding factors in their selection process: "We looked at the core ingredients, and that we could easily expand it down the road. We use features like the UC Agent desktop client, ACD, the reporting system (GNAV), but there's so much more we can add to this and build on in the near future. Because the NEC solution is so expandable, it's viable for us for a much longer period of time."

NEC support working closely with Knott's Berry Farm's IT staff on this system upgrade resulted in a smooth, cost effective migration solution for both the Hotel and Park properties, with no downtime or disruption to business communications or operations.

## Results

"With this new technology," said Prescott, "we're able to confirm that Housekeeping knows what to do, and that a room's status is accurately showing in the system. NEC's solutions for hospitality are definitely improving our housekeeping efficiency. Our employees were a major consideration—a happy team is able to make our guests happy."

Global Navigator call metrics are customized and are now assisting the

Reservations manager in staffing the centers appropriately to greatly reduce caller hold times. GNAV provides management with the real-time visibility, call load metrics, and agent information needed for improved staff management, more informed administration, and to anticipate and manage traffic levels.

Mr. Toves added, "Global Navigator is giving us 'live auditing' for better administrative feedback. Also, having control of Automated Attendant greetings (and the time-of-day/ day-of-week control over call answering and routing), makes a real difference in the efficiency of the call flow, with less hold time and improved guest relations."

With the UC Agent application, call center agents can now login on their desktops to get in queue for incoming calls, and view the status/ presence of other agents or colleagues.

"Before," stated Ms. Vogelsang, "our Knott's organization had many disparate telephone numbers. With the new system, there is a central number that really streamlines activity for the call centers, and allows guests to quickly reach the right person."

Knott's Berry Farm Hotel now has a highly reliable unified communications solution with state-of-the art functionality for optimum operational efficiency—and this upgrade was strategically planned and installed, with no downtime, through a cost effective migration able to utilize existing technology.

With the NEC UNIVERGE SV9500 platform deployed, and UC for Enterprise suite of applications and the UCE Contact Center suite in place, a robust architecture now supports and facilitates a total "smart enterprise" solution that has improved the way Knott's Berry Farm Hotel manages its daily hospitality business operations. Through this transition, the hotel has realized an increase in productivity and call efficiency, with a positive impact on management, reservations personnel, the entire hotel staff, and the total Knott's Berry Farm Hotel guest experience.

Mr. Prescott stated, "I would definitely tell anyone in my position that the system works, that it's a solid platform, that it's cost effective and very reasonable--and the biggest thing is the expandability. This solution allows for future expansion, and with technology moving so fast, we have to keep up. It's what our guests expect."

**NEC's Relationship with Our Customer**

With a long history of support for this customer and an in-depth understanding of Knott's Berry Farm's unique business challenges, NEC's Solutions Integrators have built a strong relationship with this organization.

Knott's IT Director, confirmed, "My day-to-day job here at Knott's is about providing support. The partnership with NEC has been outstanding, and very beneficial to my managing communications in this environment."

"It was a very down-to-earth team," stated Ms. Vogelsang. "They weren't trying to sell us 'bells and whistles'—but just what we needed, and we could add the bells and whistles as we wanted to. The cost savings was a driving factor, as well as the relationship with NEC; it's been a partnership of trust, and the support has been great."

Mr. Prescott added, "The NEC team that worked with us on this project is one of the best teams I've ever worked with in my 35+ year career in the hospitality industry. It was nice to work with people who were very knowledgeable and equally dedicated to this being a successful project. And afterwards, the ongoing support from NEC has been great."



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