



CASE STUDY

Tidewater Finance unifies phone communications with FortiVoice



Existing phone system is lack of flexibility for business growth

Tidewater Finance Company is in the bustling business of providing retail customer financing through dealers of furniture, cars, heating and air conditioningsystems and the like. It's a busy space to be in, and the Virginia Beach company just added a second office across the countr in Henderson, Nevada. Add to that the phone-intensive nature of the business and the strict regulatory environment in which it works, and you've got a company with rigorous requirements for a phone system.

Marcel Vanwerkhoven, Tidewater Director of IT, was using an old Avaya system to keep workers on the phone in both locations and over dozens of departments. With the new office and increasing need to accommodate teleworkers, he started shopping for a new phone system that could more smoothly integrate his workforce, no matter where they were.

A mission-critical alternative

"One of the biggest things on my agenda in the research," Vanwerkhoven says, "was the concept of making us appear as one unified company, where it didn't matter if we have two or three or four offices, anywhere in the world really.

"The old system is strictly based on the old landlines," he says. "The wired PBX. We decided to jump into the VoIP arena with FortiVoice."

The VoIP-based FVC-200D phone system that Vanwerkhoven chose gave him the flexibility he needed to easily integrate his new office. "It could bring both of our offices underone roof. I have about 90 people there, but now they're just part of the office. It gives us more capabilities as far as how we build our communication structure."

A flexible, connected system simplifies communications

FortiVoice not only makes it easy to integrate his other office, but allows him to integrate teleworkers on the fly. "We'd like to give incentives to people. To say, you don't have to come in Saturday, just work from home. Here's a phone, or load this softphone on your computer." The FortiVoice system allows just that, treating offsite extensions exactly as though they were in the office.

Vanwerkhoven says he could have done a similar integration with his existing system, but not without adding further equipment to his aging infrastructure. With FortiVoice, multi-location and teleworker integration is all built-in, with no extra licenses or equipment upgrades.

"That's a strength FortiVoice has, trying to make it easy for anybody to set it up. That's a big boost."

– Mark Vanwerkhoven, Director of IT, Tidewater Finance Company

Details

Customer: Tidewater Finance Company

Industry: Financial Services

Location: Headquarters in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Branch office in Henderson, Nevada

But Tidewater had a further challenge that Vanwerkhoven had to solve. In spite of heavy call volumes, the company records all of its calls. In Tidewater's business, it's essential to maintain scrupulously clear compliance with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and other regulators. Recording calls is part of the way Tidewater does that.

"We have to make sure our ducks are in a row on what we deal with", Vanwerkhoven says. "Are our statements valid? Do we handle customers properly? Things like that."

His old system required a third-party device to facilitate his heavy call recording needs, as did the other new systems he looked at. But Vanwerkhoven was delighted to find that FortiVoice could do it out of the box.

"That was one of the selling points. If I didn't have that, I would have had to figure something out to make it work. We record full-time. The thing is set for recording, period. Every call gets recorded. It's not like they have to press a button. That's one of the keys; a strength that FortiVoice had."

Integration achieved, many other benefits too

He was also attracted to the flexibility and competitive pricing of Fortinet's FortiCall VoIP services. FortiCall allows him to set up his own phone lines and numbers as easily as he sets up new extensions, which is just how he likes it. In fact, Vanwerkhoven installed and configured the entire system himself, something that wasn't possible with his prior system.

"That's a strength FortiVoice has, trying to make it easy for anybody to set it up. That's a big boost." Vanwerkhoven has taken advantage of complete control over set-up to ensure that he can manage the transition without missing a beat. The phones are too mission-critical at Tidewater for him to make a misstep, so he's transferring users group by group to the new system, making sure everything works perfectly before moving on to the next group.

"I'm comfortably expanding, let's put it that way. I don't want to just flick the switch and say, there you go guys! I can't go too terribly fast, because it'll tax me also," he says with a laugh. As the man in charge of all of Tidewater's IT, not just its phone infrastructure, he knows that introducing users to new technology isn't always easy.

"I've got a lot of whiners here," he says, echoing the lament of IT guys everywhere, "but so far I feel pretty good. I get the usual complaints, but I have yet to put a service ticket in."

Business Impacts

- Seamlessly integrates a branch office and teleworkers into a single system capable of high call volumes
- Built-in call recording with capacity to record and store all calls, automatically (or on-demand)
- Fast and flexible configuration of the system and of FortiCall services

Solutions

- Two FVC-200D phone systems, one to ensure high availability
- Built-in call recording with capacity to record and store all calls, automatically (or on-demand)
- Fast and flexible configuration of the system and of FortiCall services