

EuroPlex Cinémas in Switzerland takes the drama out of film bookings with Alcatel converged voice and data solution



"With the Alcatel OmniPCX Office, we can have our cake and eat it: install a full IP voice solution while still keeping some of our legacy switches - all at an unbeatable price to quality ratio."
Frédéric Erni, IT and development director, EuroPlex Cinémas

EuroPlex Cinémas is a household name in French-speaking Switzerland. The company has 35 cinema theatres at 13 different sites throughout the Lake Geneva region - from the Swiss capital to Lausanne - making it the biggest cinema exhibitor in the French-speaking part of the country. Film lovers appreciate the wide choice of movies it offers as well as the quality of its screens and theatres.

EuroPlex Cinémas is a subsidiary of EuroPlex, a European exhibitor based in the UK.

A company with this level of brand recognition deserves a telecommunication system that upholds its prestige and professionalism in the eyes of the cinema-going public and film industry peers.

Until last year, Swisscom, the national operator, provided EuroPlex's sites with phone switches and rented it an eclectic mix of phone

terminals from various brands.

The system kept the company's 200 staff in contact.

However, under the old setup, EuroPlex had to pay for any internal call from one site to another, added an extra, unwanted cost burden.

Furthermore, when there was a problem at a particular site, the company had to systematically contact the operator and valuable time was lost waiting for technicians to physically turn up. In terms of the phone terminals, running a string of separate service and maintenance contracts proved costly and mastering the differences between the various phone brands time-consuming.

Besides these drawbacks, in the interests of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and future expansion, the company was keen on bringing together a new voice solution with its pre-existent data system in one converged network.

Challenges

- Replace former telephone system with one homogenous solution
- Converge voice and data network
- Install full IP network while keeping certain legacy TDM switches

Solutions

- 4 Alcatel **OmniPCX Office** via Internet (IP WAN)
- 21 remote IP Phones via hired lines, ADSL and SDSL

Benefits

- Unbeatable price to quality ratio
- Lower communication costs - free internal calls between all 13 sites
- Converged network compatible with legacy PABXs
- Faster, more cost-effective maintenance
- Simple expansion of the system to CTI or **contact center**

To keep installation costs down, EuroPlex also wanted to keep several legacy PABXs in its smaller sites, while ensuring that these could be integrated into the new Voice over IP network.

Given all these considerations, EuroPlex cinemas chose Alcatel as its preferred partner.

With Alcatel, the public rings one simple public number handled by the system to reach any of the company's box offices for bookings or queries. Staff can also be contacted via direct lines.

Three months after installation and EuroPlex's communications costs have already dropped. Hardly surprising given that all internal calls throughout its 13 sites are totally free - it simply pays one broadband connection fee with no extra hidden costs.

Its existing data system has now been effortlessly converged with the new voice network, which integrates seamlessly with the old switches that the company chose to keep in some of the smaller sites. EuroPlex can now migrate to full IP at these locations at its own pace.

"Alcatel's price to quality ratio is unbeatable. The fact that we could keep some of our existing PABXs in parallel with the new voice system was crucial. Looking at the competitors, it is simply impossible to have a similar solution for the same price," says Frédéric Erni, IT and development director, EuroPlex Cinémas.

But the advantages to EuroPlex go much further than that. Thanks to DECT mobile handsets, cinema staff are always in touch wherever they are in the complexes.

The new network has also taken the headache out of maintenance.

Before, the slightest hitch meant putting in a call in to the operator. After receiving training on the new system from Alcatel, EuroPlex's own technical team is now capable of handling many problems on its own. And when it does need outside help, the company is in direct contact via the internal IP network with an expert from Infoform, the Alcatel business partner that recommended and installed the solution. No need to wait for a technician

to physically turn up to a particular complex to fix something, as all maintenance is carried out remotely over the network.

And life is simpler regarding the terminals themselves. From a bewildering mix of different brands, now all terminals are Alcatel, bringing down the costs of maintenance and service and making it easier to replace a given phone with a spare and to have in-depth knowledge of its features.

Looking to the future, EuroPlex is already considering expanding its network to include more terminals and contact center and Computer Telephony Integration features, so that callers can be directed to an automatic information service or reach an operator at the touch of a telephone key.

"Infoform, our traditional IT partner, highly recommended Alcatel to us, as they have used their solutions for some time. We were right to trust them as we are delighted with the result," says Frédéric Erni.


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