



An Appia Case Study

The mission of Equip for Equality (EFE) is to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with physical and mental disabilities in Illinois. It is the only statewide, cross-disability, comprehensive advocacy organization providing self-advocacy assistance, legal services, and disability rights education while also engaging in public policy and legislative advocacy and conducting abuse investigations and other oversight activities.

By implementing a solution from Appia Communications, the agency has been able to free up resources that it uses to pursue its mission.

Business Challenge

The organization was not happy with its existing phone system and was not getting the customer service they needed from their service provider. "We were on an older digital phone system with phone service provided by a major carrier," says Hugh Smith, IT Director of EFE, "The cost of the phone system was very high and the service response for phone outage was not very reliable."

The Appia Solution

Appia implemented an IP communications system using Cisco 7940 and 7960 IP phones and equipment, including a Cisco 7935 conference station. The installation also included a system at one of EFE's regional offices in Springfield, Illinois, which allowed them to call between these offices at no cost.

The Results

"The implementation of the Chicago and Springfield offices worked out very well. Our success was due to Appia's pro-active involvement in the planning stage of implementing the system," said Smith, "There have been significant cost savings of 30-50% for EFE since implementing the Appia system, even with the expansion of the system for additional staff over the last few years. Also, since EFE has been on the Appia system, we have found the service to be reliable and key Appia representatives responsive to our needs."

The agency was particularly pleased with the scalability of the new system. "The system was expandable and able to handle the significant staff increase at EFE of about a 90-100% over the last few years," said Smith.



Within a year of the original installation, EFE faced another challenge with the relocation of its Chicago office. Appia was a key member of the move team, which included EFE staff, the new building owners, representatives from major telecommunications companies, and the construction/build out company.

“As a result of Appia's very active involvement and generation of creative approaches in this cooperative team effort, the Appia system was moved to the new building and up and running for the staff on their first day in the new building,” Smith added.

The Future

EFE has already begun the process of integrating its two additional regional offices into their Appia IP network. “We have moved ahead and are currently in the project installation phase for our second regional office in Carbondale, Illinois, and are actively working with Appia to plan and install the system,” Smith said recently. “We are also working with Appia to add a special education hotline to our system.”

For more information on EFE, please visit: <http://equipforequality.org/>