

IP Communications for Manufacturers: An Appia Case Study



THE NEW YORK BLOWER COMPANY



For over 100 years, New York Blower (www.nyb.com) has been a leading manufacturer of industrial fans and blowers. NYB carries the most complete product portfolio in the business, and its products are distributed through an extensive worldwide network of over 300 representatives.

The Challenge

New York Blower's phone system was aging, and the provider announced that it was discontinuing support for the system. NYB was facing an expensive replacement.

"We were leaning toward staying with our current provider," said John Mearns, NYB's manager of information technology. "But we knew that would mean another major upgrade in three or four years, and another full replacement in eight or 10."

To stay in touch in an expansive manufacturing facility where workers and managers had to be mobile, NYB was also paying for cell phones for shop-floor supervision. "We wanted supervisors on the shop floor supervising, instead of being tied to a desk," Mearns said. "We needed mobility, but we were also looking to scale back our cellular expenses."

NYB boiled its needs down to three basic goals:

- Stop having to replace its phone system every five years
- Control overall costs
- Find a better mobile communication system for the shop floor



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The Test

NYB had an existing relationship with Appia Partner STRYD Technologies (www.stryd.net). As part of his due diligence, Mearns talked to Dan Morse, STRYD's senior vice president, who explained the benefits of a hosted model.

"John told me what they were facing with their phone system," Morse said. "We thought we had a better way, and we told them about Appia."

It would take some convincing. NYB had kept an eye on VoIP solutions since 2000, but had always been unimpressed. "We just didn't see the return on investment that was always promised," Mearns said.

STRYD crossed the first hurdle with an impromptu demonstration. "Dan grabbed his own desk phone and brought it to our office," Mearns said. "We just plugged it in and it worked. Within a couple of minutes, he could dial four digits and talk to his office manager from our conference room."

Said Morse, "It gave NYB the confidence that a hosted VoIP implementation was worth considering."

But would the ROI add up? NYB compared several options and found that it did — and then some.

"Out of everything we looked at, the first 12 months of the Appia/STRYD solution cost about 15% less," Mearns said. "But over time, eliminating the cycle of update and replacement costs made the real difference. Over the expected 10-year life of a purchased system, this could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars. The hosted solution came out far ahead of anything else."

The Solution

NYB expanded the implementation to include all three of its sites in La Porte, Indiana, Willowbrook, Illinois, and Effingham, Illinois. The process included a full network equipment refresh and configuration for over 200 phones.



“We were able to lower NYB’s equipment costs because of our relationship with Cisco, and because a hosted solution requires less equipment overall,” Morse said.

The refresh included dedicated Appia T-1 connections, giving NYB a truly private network for far less than it had been paying to use the public Internet.

“We used to have to handle this separately through another provider,” Mearns said. “The Appia Private Network is much cheaper, and it’s faster, even with phone traffic on it. Our users tell us they have noticed the improvement in performance, and we like that our business traffic is off the public Internet.”

NYB also took advantage of two of Appia’s network services, WANNet and WANCare Management. WANNet provides round-the-clock network equipment support, and WANCare Management is Appia’s 24/7/365 network monitoring and management service. The staff at Appia’s Network Operations Center monitors NYB’s network and provides reports on its performance and health. If there’s ever a problem, Appia’s engineers work issues through to resolution.

On the shop floor, IP WiFi access points and mobile IP phones replaced the cumbersome and costly cellular contracts, giving NYB both the mobility and cost savings it had been seeking.

“We have five different buildings at our La Porte location, and we’re able to move seamlessly between all of them,” Mearns said. “We’re all on the same phone system whether we’re at our desks or not.”

The Results

“It has worked out very well,” Mearns said. “We’re very happy with the Appia Private Network. We’re able to separate business traffic from Internet browsing traffic, and we have redundant connections configured to kick in automatically in case of any outage.”

With one phone system serving all three sites, NYB enjoys features such as a common voicemail system and four-digit dialing between sites, fostering a single corporate identity and lowering calling costs.



“We’re also saving a lot of time,” Mearns said. “We no longer have to be telephone managers. When it comes to the phones, we just plug them in and answer any emails that come in to the support center. We’re free to focus on other tasks.”

New York Blower plans to expand the system to include other sites in the near future.

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