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### What Works at Work: Case Studies

SOS/Cisco Installs Less Cookie Cutter, More Shoe Leather



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When hard-nose detectives chase down information, they speak of burning through a lot of shoe leather. This could also apply to Gia McNutt, CEO of Rocklin, Calif.-based SOS ([www.team-sos.com](http://www.team-sos.com)), a reseller and installer of advanced communications products and managed services.

When SOS designs a network for a client, McNutt insists her company immediately gets to know the client's needs and business culture. McNutt says her discovery process comprises more than a cookie-cutter equipment configuration.

"We have a tried and true methodology," says McNutt. "We secure our clients not by being the lowest bid, but by the way we approach our pre-work. We interview our end users and observe their businesses before we even deliver our RFP response."

Having been in business for 15 years, and with 40+ employees, SOS sports a client portfolio with the likes of Trader Joe's and Vegas.com.

Enter McNutt's latest customer, Auburn, Calif.-based Chapa De Indian Health Program, Inc., a nonprofit that provides health care services to American Indians/Alaskan Native, MediCal/Medicare recipients, medically indigent, and other populations regardless of their ability to pay.

Chapa De provides services for more than 4,600 Northern Californian patients a year at its clinics in Auburn, Woodland, and Grass Valley. Chapa De's clinics have grown faster than its legacy phone network.

"It was a low-tech organization that grew organically," says McNutt. Chapa De sported 66 Centrex lines, various PSTN phone lines using old TDM technology, and an older, non-converged Toshiba PBX. The Centrex lines weren't cheap, costing \$35 per month per line.

"In the main clinic we had a 15-year-old phone system that was slowly dying on us," says Lisa Davies, Compliance Director for Chapa De.

Further running up Chapa De's bill, its three clinics weren't connected on an IT network, which meant they weren't taking advantage of toll-free VoIP calling. Dialing an office in a building at the other end of the parking lot was charged as a local toll call. These charges accounted for a large percentage of Chapa De's \$1,200 monthly long-distance charges.

The clinics received a broadband network through a contracted lease on a U.S. Department of Defense

backbone, while AT&T handled the carrier voice service.

“They pay very little for T1 service,” says McNutt.

A mutual acquaintance played matchmaker and put Chapa De in touch with SOS. Chapa De sent out an RFP to several companies. Wendy Hawkins, an SOS Systems Consultant, met with Chapa De to explore what was working and what was broken with its legacy phone system. This included shadowing employees and interviewing each department.

SOS proposed installing a soup-to-nuts Cisco package, including CallManager with a flexible Unity auto attendant, and IP Contact Center (IPCC) Express, an automatic call-distribution application for its receptionist group. Cisco switches and routers were installed in the data closet, while 126 Cisco handset phones were plugged into the three clinics. Altogether, the solution and installation cost roughly \$185,000.

“Our chairperson was there the night we opened the RFPs,” says Davies. “She was very clear: ‘This company gets it.’”

Hawkins ordered the Cisco equipment, taking 40 to 60 hours to configure the gear offsite at SOS’s laboratory. SOS also launched its SmartLaunch Kit, a marketing and training program familiarizing employees with the new phone functions. The campaign is designed to combat the natural employee resistance to change. After all, people fear what they do not understand.

“The SmartLaunch Kit’s posters, brochures, and displays made adoption here easier,” says Davies.

SOS held quizzes and rewarded prizes to get Chapa De employees enthusiastic about the changes. Over several months, Chapa De workers who quickly got up to speed on the new system received “Super User” buttons so co-workers knew whom to ask for extra guidance. There were three days of training, with 50 people getting at least one hour of training. There were no pilot tests. The rip-and-replace installation phase took less than a week.

“We did a side-by-side install,” says Hawkins. “We brought in the new system and moved the PRI for a seamless transition. Then we swapped out the phones so there was no loss of business.” As for return on investment, eliminating the Centrex lines saves Chapa De about \$1,500 a month, while long-distance charges have dropped by \$700 a month.

“We’re actually saving somewhere in the neighborhood of \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year,” says Davies.

Patients are benefiting, too. Thanks to implementation of IPCC Express by SOS, patient calls are distributed among the receptionists in the order the calls arrive. V

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