

# Richmond Housing Partnership

## Housing Association benefits from a customer service renovation

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### PROFILE

#### Customer

- Richmond Housing Partnership

#### Industry

- Housing Association

#### Challenges

- Previous system outgrown
- Previous communication costs too high
- Multi-site operation plus call centre
- Management of call centre team performance required

#### Solution

- SV8100 Communications Platform
- UC for Business

#### Results

- Reduced communication costs
- Improved customer service
- Flexible working for employees allowing call centre to cope with call traffic spikes
- Better integration of calls and databases

### CUSTOMER PROFILE

Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) is a customer-focussed organisation that owns and manages over 10,000 properties in South West London. A registered social landlord and a charitable industrial and provident society, it primarily operates in Richmond and Hounslow, with smaller operations in Slough and Reading. It also manages shared ownership schemes, leaseholder customers, tenant customers, garages and a small number of shops. RHP was also recognised this year as one of the top 5 UK companies to work for in the Sunday Times, Best Companies Survey.

### CHALLENGE

When RHP was set up it inherited an outdated and expensive phone system. It needed something slicker that would enable

it to implement a call centre. The company also had no way of measuring performance. In 2003 Southern Communications installed an NEC system, which allowed RHP to have a call centre with 25 agents. One of the agents' responsibilities is to record the reason for calls and the action taken. Calls can be recorded, which is useful for training staff and improving the service.

“Having the call centre gave us that ability to track performance and to deliver a better and more joined up service to our customers,” says Jonathan Creaser, RHP's head of ICT. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) was installed at remote site offices, which replaced expensive phone lines with one broadband line. Calls can now be routed to people who work in different offices on different days.

The new system provides management information regarding length of calls, how quickly the call was answered, and how well





each agent is performing. “The total cost of ownership was lower because we weren’t paying out so much in maintenance but we had more functionality for our money,” says Creaser. “And we were using more industry standard type equipment so people who we employed understood how to use it.”

### SOLUTION

Last year Southern Communications implemented an upgrade, NEC’s new product called Unified Communications for Business (UCB). If the call centre is particularly busy, the number of agents can be expanded by diverting calls to other extensions in the building. Customers whose call is not answered within 30 seconds can request a call back. They can also request a call at a certain time through the website.

Jonathan continues, “Previously we outsourced an application that provided a call-back service. Now we have this functionality built-in, it has saved us an incredible £20k per annum! UCB has really helped us build better customer relationships, especially with the Preferred Agent feature which directs callers to the person they spoke to previously. It helps reduce the frustration of repeating information and really speeds things up.”

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Southern Communications tailored the NEC system to RHP’s business requirements and simplified the installation by project managing the entire process. Time was critical – RHP could not have any down time and customers were expecting a new system – so Southern Communications put in hardware and tested it in advance, then made the system live over Christmas when calls went to RHP’s out-of-hours service.

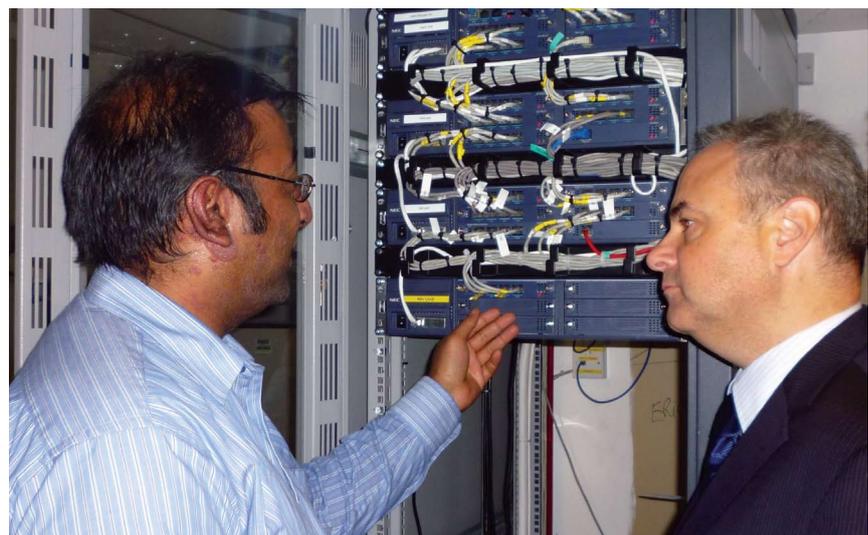
### BENEFITS

Southern Communications and NEC’s joined up approach means that RHP’s questions have been resolved quickly and easily. “I feel that we bought into a product that

has got a well-defined road map because it’s based on very solid technology,” says Creaser. In the future RHP will increase integration between the phone system and its databases so that it can identify patterns in calls by geographical area and type of call (repairs, antisocial behaviour, and so on).

“The vast majority of communication we have with our customers is on the phone so it was a critical thing that we needed to sort out.

We can now offer our callers a higher standard of service than ever before thanks to the NEC solutions dramatically boosting our capabilities.”



Riaz Ashruf, Infrastructure Manager and Jonathan Creaser, Head of ICT