



shift*eight Telephony gives DSL provider operational visibility of 24-hour call centre

Axxess operates a sales call centre, fully managed 24 x 7 technical support call centre, and a back office that each rely on efficient telephone communications to engage with clients and drive business processes.

- 40 sales agents take an average of 29,000 calls per month.
- 43 back office staff provide telephonic after-sales services and support.
- 24-hour technical support staff manage around 17,500 calls per month.
- The company services a client-base of 25,000 users.

Business Challenge

The company's analogue PBX system offered little in the way of operational controls. Reporting was handled by an external system that provided a retrospective view of activities at best.

Specifically, missing features included:

- Reporting
- Call recording
- Flexibility
- The ability to run on a virtual infrastructure
- Self-administration
- Scalability
- Reliable support backing the solution

The Search

Axxess is an avid user of virtualisation and open source software. The former allows them to utilise their systems to maximum capacity while offering inherent disaster recovery. The latter provides a low-cost, flexible means to fine tune business processes to their needs.

Says Axxess Managing Director, Andrew Simpson: "We favour open source because community-driven projects typically offer extensions developed by members who have already solved the problems you're facing. Updates are also easier to come by."

The current PBX met neither of these conditions. Other business-critical criteria included:

- Operational visibility through real-time reporting of activity data, such as queue lengths, call duration, and agent capacity
- Complete system transparency, including configuration management
- Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) to allow intelligent, automated call routing
- Integration capabilities to allow CRM and business process integration, and customisation when required
- PRI (Primary Rate Interface) for guaranteed Quality of Service over PSTN
- VoIP within the company

Axxess were interested in Switchvox by Digium and were referred to Clarotech who are certified Asterisk and Switchvox partners. After initial discussions, they switched focus to a shift*eight solution powered by Asterisk, giving them the capacity to manipulate the solution directly to suit their needs.

Industry:

Internet services

Offering:

The sale and support of ADSL Internet services, hosting and mobile solutions to the broader South African consumer and SME markets.

Problem:

Inadequate reporting and controls to measure and improve call centre efficiency, service levels and costs.

Solution:

Clarotech shift*eight Call Centre

call 021 689 5330

email shifteight@clarotech.co.za

visit www.clarotech.co.za

The Solution

After the initial sales process, Clarotech's technical team and Axxess' process champions held a project definition workshop to determine project goals and critical success factors. The teams together set milestones and determined time lines.

Because Axxess is an ISP with technical skills and takes a hands-on approach to their systems, collaboration with Clarotech was key to the success of the installation. Each team was assigned tasks relevant to their roles.

The workshop also laid the foundation for the project management process to follow.

The company elected to install Clarotech's shift*eight, an integrated PBX and call centre solution that offers in-house customisations built around the Asterisk core.

The system would be installed on a VMWare virtual machine with the ClaroVoice VoIP service as the outbound termination provider.

Axxess also opted for ongoing support, including proactive remote monitoring, with guaranteed response times formalised through a service level agreement (SLA).

Implementation

When the project started, Clarotech's technical team flew from Cape Town to roll out the solution at Axxess' headquarters in Port Elizabeth.

Axxess needed to maintain unbroken operational continuity during the installation process. So the new PBX was installed alongside the original.

The old PBX remained running in parallel for 2 weeks after shift*eight was installed. This provided a buffer against any teething problems during that time and ensured that staff were proficient in using the new system.

From the initial workshop to go-live, the entire project was completed within 2 months.

Challenges

Location

A major challenge to the project was that cutover from the old PBX to the new one was only possible while the Clarotech team was on site in Port Elizabeth. Should a problem occur after implementation, business would be delayed by the team's journey back from Cape Town. Thorough planning and execution of the installation ensured that the cut-over to shift*eight was without incident. The system has been operating without fault since.

Cutover

Axxess could not afford any downtime. Because they are part of the Afrihost group and are essentially an internal service provider, being without communications would have a knock-on effect at a higher level.

The call centre is a 24-hour-a-day interface between the company and its customers. Any lengthy interruption would impact its reputation as a reliable service provider.

Timing

To make the transition seamless, the new shift*eight server was set up in parallel to the existing switchboard. Calls continued to route in as usual while shift*eight was tested internally and ClaroVoice was tested for outbound calls. Once users were comfortable, the Telkom PRI line simply needed to be disconnected and reconnected to complete the migration.

Project success factors

The project was successfully implemented because:

- The Axxess call centre manager and IT manager understood the technical aspects of the system, so their assistance helped maintain momentum.
- Much preparation and planning went into the implementation process before the project commenced. Although time consuming, the extra effort ensured a smooth cutover with no delays or issues.
- "Clarotech and Axxess staff together formed the project team, combining a broad range of skills and knowledge," said Geoff, Clarotech project manager. "The partnership, understanding and mutual trust which was built proved key to successfully delivering this project."

Services:

Clarotech consulting,
project management and
professional implementation
Clarotech after sales support and
remote monitoring
ClaroVoice VoIP service over fibre
with redundancy over ADSL
Custom IVR survey

Result:

Live reporting provides real-time
operational visibility of call centre
activity and service delivery,
with the metrics needed to drive
improved efficiencies. ClaroVoice
call rates are lower than
competitive offerings, providing
measurable savings.

Clarotech qualifications:

Digium Asterisk Certified Partner
Digium 2015 Partner Award
Digium Certified Asterisk Trainers

Training

Clarotech provided Axxess with complete training on shift*eight. A team of product trainers flew to PE to train receptionists, back-office staff and agents on the use of the new IP phones. Technical staff were trained on the system and how to manage it on their own.

Benefits

With the system successfully installed, Axxess has realised its key success criteria.

- Real-time reporting gives call centre managers and executives the desired visibility into call centre activity, including call waiting time, queue length, time spent on calls, agent inactivity, and more. This allows them to proactively manage their efficiencies.
- shift*eight offers a call rating module that will allow Axxess to set KPIs across areas of service and measure the call centre's effectiveness in achieving those levels.
- With the PBX running inside a virtual machine, Axxess can hold a clone of the entire system as a backup. In the case of a disaster, simply copying back the VM image means the PBX can be operational again with minimal delay.
- Because it's open source, the system can grow with their needs and adapt to business process changes without incurring prohibitive costs.
- Integration to the company's CRM system allows account records to be automatically retrieved as callers are identified, improving productivity.
- shift*eight can service more operators than the old PBX - up to 500 users in its current configuration - so they can scale up capacity to meet increased demand.
- IT administers the system through a management UI, without calling on a third-party service technician to change settings.
- ClaroVoice offers much lower costs on VoIP than competing services, resulting in substantial long-term savings.
- Clarotech offers remote 24-7-365 monitoring and support to identify technical issues and correct them preemptively.
- shift*eight provides all the features Axxess desired for their PBX, including call recording, easy-to-use IVR, intelligent hunting, and more.

"Our overall impression of Clarotech is very good," reports Andrew Simpson, Managing Director at Axxess. "We've enjoyed dealing with everyone from their projects managers to the technicians who implemented the solution to the after-sales account manager. Everyone has been brilliant and everything I asked for, I got."

Conclusion

Axxess' new PBX is just one of almost 200 shift*eight telephone systems installed at 90+ companies across South Africa. shift*eight is ideal for any organisation that relies on telephone communications to engage their clients, including marketing and support call centres, emergency services, government operations, and more.

Because shift*eight is based on the Asterisk framework, Clarotech customers enjoy the cost-savings and flexibility of open source backed by professional installation and support from a renowned ICT market leader.

Google, Yahoo, the US Army, eBay and over a million other companies in 170 countries trust Asterisk with their telecommunications.

About Axxess

Axxess markets and supports simple and affordable ADSL, hosting and mobile solutions to South African consumers and SMEs. Based in Port Elizabeth, the independently-owned company was founded over 15 years ago, and has been awarded "Best ISP in South Africa" 2 years in a row.

About Clarotech Consulting

Clarotech Consulting (Pty) Ltd is an IT infrastructure company offering support and consulting services to the mid-market. It is the leading provider of Asterisk PBX products and support with installations in the mid-market, corporates and dedicated call centres throughout South Africa. Clarotech's flagship PBX and Call Centre solution is shift*eight, an integrated PBX solution based on Asterisk open source software and in-house developed software. More information is available at www.Clarotech.co.za.

"I have been very impressed with the Clarotech team thus far and I'm sure that the support and billing departments will continue to deliver exceptional service."

David Gunston, Axxess IT Manager