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Case Study

3Com® Voice Solution Rings Up Customer Satisfaction

Customer Profile:

First Reliance Bank
No. of Employees: 65
Location: Florence, SC
Sites: Two
Vertical Industry: Banking
Value Added Reseller: Business Data Systems, Florence, SC
Implemented: May 2002
Win over: Cisco

The Challenge

First Reliance Bank is one of the southeast's fastest-growing banks. Founded in 1999, the locally owned community bank today boasts a main facility, a branch office and a new operations center, and plans to open at least five new branches by 2007. This aggressive growth strategy is fueled by the bank's commitment to provide a level of customer service usually found only at much larger institutions.

As First Reliance grew, it quickly realized its legacy PBX system was hindering its customer service. With the bank using separate phone systems at each site, customers were forced to hang up and redial when calling staff located at different sites. Employees who wanted to reach a co-worker at the other location also had to dial up the main switchboard and then punch in an extension. Moreover, changing, moving, or adding extensions required a \$75-per-hour technician -- which, given the bank's growth, cost as much as \$10,000 per quarter.

First Reliance needed a scalable, affordable, easy to manage IP-based phone solution that would improve its internal communications and empower it to deliver big-bank customer service.

The Solution:

Following the recommendation of its value-added reseller, First Reliance satisfied all of its communications need with the following 3Com® solution:

- **3Com SuperStack® 3 NBX® Networked Telephony System** delivers feature-rich, premium-quality telephone service via a Wide Area Network (WAN).
- **3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 4400**, which can identify and prioritize traffic such as voice and/or video and enables Ethernet voice links to the NBX phones at First Reliance.
- **3Com SuperStack 3 Switch 3300**, which enables Ethernet data traffic at First Reliance.
- **3Com Ethernet Power Source (EPS)** connects and powers NBX telephones from a single location using LAN cabling.

Benefits:

Selected over a Cisco system for its exceptional price/performance and ease of use, 3Com's networked telephony solution delivers phone services that further distinguish the bank from its competitors. In addition to dramatically enhancing customer service, the 3Com solution eliminated thousands of dollars a year in telephone maintenance costs, paying for itself in less than two years.

Operating over First Reliance's WAN, the NBX solution speeds customer calls their destination using advanced features such as call transfer, teleconferencing, and voice mail. Today, when customers call First Reliance, call transfer and direct inward dialing allow employees to forward them to any extension without requiring the customer to hang up and dial another number. Hunt groups ensure calls reach the first available employee in the relevant department, minimizing time spent on hold. They also send calls to employees' mobile phones when they're away from their desks, ensuring that staff are always within easy reach,

The 3Com solution's automated attendants inform callers about banking hours and services using customized messages. In addition, call detail reporting allows the bank to track the number of times a call was transferred, how long the customer spent on hold, and the duration of every call. Within three months of deployment, this feature revealed that the receptionist was struggling to keep up with call volumes, prompting the bank to adapt its hunt group configuration so she can effectively route every call in a single transfer. The results: enhanced customer satisfaction, with complaints dropping from 20 a week to three or less a month.

The NBX solution also gives First Reliant plenty of room for growth. Using 3Com's Browser-based NBX NetSet™ administration tool, IT staff simply plug NBX handsets into existing network jacks to complete all adds, moves, and changes in minutes with no additional investment in hardware or wiring. The bank uses 3Com's Ethernet Power Source units to power its 90 NBX handsets via existing Ethernet cabling without the cost of adding a single electrical outlet.

"Our 3Com solution allows us to cater to our customers at a level they never dreamed a mid-size community bank could offer," said Christopher S.

Hutchinson, vice president of operations. "With 3Com, we can continue to give our customers an unparalleled banking experience as we grow, while reaping outstanding savings and an extraordinary low total cost of ownership."