

Fourteen IP Case Study

Fourteen IP Finds Integration Success with Sangoma Vega Systems

Based in Lancashire, UK, Fourteen IP is an established provider of converged communications solutions and services to the hospitality industry. The company supports almost 300 of the world's leading 4- and 5-star hotels in the UK and 27 countries throughout Europe. Its substantial client list includes Marriott, Starwood, Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons, Hilton, and Intercontinental, among others.

The Challenge

Converged communications is a complex issue for the hospitality industry. According to Neil Tolley, managing director at Fourteen IP, there is a significant move to hosted telephony solutions by hotels. "Clearly, moving away from on-premise to the cloud is the right thing to do. However, there are some technical challenges in getting it all sorted out."

"Existing hotels and even new ones tend to have a lot of analog phones and don't want to change them," Tolley explains. "They simply don't want to throw away that investment."

While many hotel operations are becoming well entrenched in Wi-Fi and voice over IP (VoIP) integration, there also remains a strong reliance on on-premise landline telephone systems that need to be integrated at a relatively affordable cost. Their investment in on-premise telephone systems is a sizeable one, particularly in guest rooms where each can have up to three or four handsets. "Existing hotels and even new ones tend to have a lot of analog phones and don't want to change them," Tolley explains. "They simply don't want to throw away that investment."

Despite the resistance to change, hotels are beginning to transition to hosted telephony solutions, Tolley

says. "Hosting does provide something much more reliable today and provides a platform to be able to make changes quickly and cost effectively as communications change both for guests and hotel staff."

Part of Fourteen IP's mandate when working with customers is to build gateways to enable the integration of legacy phones with the IP backbone. "Of the hotels we provide hosted services for, 98% have analog phones in their guest rooms. To get the most out of their hosted IP infrastructure, they need a gateway for those systems."

The Solution

Fourteen IP turned to Sangoma's Vega 3000 and 5000 systems, which are analog telephony gateways specifically designed to connect legacy phone systems to an IP or VoIP backbone, or a hotel PBX. "Sangoma products proved an ideal choice because of their tight integration with Fourteen IP's BroadWorks-hosted VoIP and unified communication platform," Tolley says. "We needed a way to connect analog phones to the IP platform; and Sangoma gave us the best way of doing that."

Fourteen IP first used Vega boxes at a Marriott site in Venice. This was soon followed by an installation site in Paris. It is now in the process of rolling out the same technology in 42 Marriott locations within the UK. "We did try other gateway solutions, but we found them to be very complicated to install and impossible to support," Tolley says. "When we used the Sangoma box, the engineers were very excited about how easy it was to manage, at less cost. Since then, Sangoma has become our standard."

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The installation is very straightforward. Engineers apply the BroadWorks and website codes to the Sangoma boxes which are pre-built for each project. "Most of the work is done off site before installing and bringing them live," Tolley explains. He adds that the simplicity and ease of installation provides for easy scalability.

The Result

Sangoma provides a base configuration and training courses for Fourteen IP's technicians, which has helped to speed up deployments considerably, and reduces time for moves and changes.

Linking hundreds of analog phones (including those in the lobby) demands a substantial amount of connectivity work. Not only does the Sangoma solution connect phones to the telephony service, but boxes can also replicate a PBX in the event of a system failure.

"If somebody cuts through the Internet cable outside, the Sangoma box will automatically create an internal PBX so internal calls can still be made versus routing them over the Internet," Tolley says. "It's an important disaster recovery element."

Tolley says this is particularly critical when it comes to emergency contact calls. "That's the single biggest concern for hotels. The Sangoma boxes provide a very critical service. And the fact they can do it reliably all over the world may not be the most exciting feature, but it is essential."

Fourteen IP has used Vega systems in 10 different countries to date. Tolley reports it has been smooth sailing at virtually every site. "Sangoma has worked in every country where we have deployed it. In fact, it has been key to what we do as an integrator. We won't work without it."