
Wayne Township Cuts Costs with Converged Ethernet

By Scott Pasternak
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In Wayne New Jersey's "State of the Township" address, Mayor Christopher P. Vergano portrayed the common budgetary climate facing governments across our nation. "The year 2009 is going to be a very difficult one for the Wayne Township Municipal Government," he said. "We pledge to be diligent in preparing a budget that is fiscally conservative while still meeting the needs of our constituency." Located in the heart of Passaic County New Jersey, less than twenty miles from midtown New York City, Wayne Township offers its citizens and guests a balanced suburban community, being named one of the Top 100 Best Places to Live by Money Magazine in 2008. But like all governments across our nation, Wayne is trying to find creative ways to save taxpayer money.

One area that Wayne thought it could save some money was on its telecom services. This idea was hatched by the mayor's desire to save on his own residential phone service. Tired of paying over \$100 a month to his local telephone provider for phone service alone, Mayor Vergano decided to look into consolidating his TV, Internet and phone service with a bundled VoIP solution from his local cable television and Internet provider. "I investigated it and as it turned out I ended up paying \$29.99 for the first phone line and \$14.95 for a second phone line, which is quite a substantial savings over the \$100 that I was paying every month for phone service before," said Mayor Vergano, "Because I did it at my house, why can't we do it here? Sure enough, our IT Director Scott Pasternak went and did the research and called me several weeks later and said 'we can do it here and we can save \$50,000 a year once we're done making the switch'."

While saving \$50,000 on telecom services alone probably won't make national news, it's a tangible benefit, especially for local governments trying to chip away at the impact of these economic times on our budgets and our services. But while saving money alone is compelling, maintaining what Wayne considers an enterprise class solution to ensure it can maintain a consistent level of municipal services for the township's residents is primary. Wayne is in the business of providing public safety services, which goes far beyond police, fire and ambulance. We needed to make sure we maintained communications for public works, refuse collection, parks, recreation, and beyond, so Wayne felt a typical VoIP solution could not meet the demanding needs of supporting a community of well over 50,000 residents and the ballooning business daytime population.

Wayne Information Technologies Department decided to leverage an existing contract to minimize the financial burden of cancellation fees across multiple providers, and consolidated its voice, data and video services onto a Metro Ethernet based connection, as well as its SONET-based WAN connecting three complexes at town hall, public works and water pollution control, into a single contract with one vendor. To implement Wayne Mayor's vision of VoIP, a flat rate coast-to-coast voice service contract was signed, so Wayne no longer has to pay separate bills for local and long distance phone calls, or data services.

By consolidating all of its data and voice services onto a 10 Mbps Metro Ethernet based service, Wayne carved out 3 Mbps dedicated to 2 PRIs for voice. The mayor is very happy Wayne is running VoIP, although technically he knows it's not. The cost associated with the carrier-grade Ethernet and the consolidation is commensurate on an enterprise-grade level with the Mayor's version of a consumer grade VoIP solution implemented in his home. Wayne implemented IP-based PBX trunking across its WAN to bring all voice communications to a central hub location, and through the 2 PRIs carved out of the Metro Ethernet service and the implementation of flat rate billing for its phone calls, was able to substantially reduce the costs of local and long distance phone service. Wayne did maintain several traditional analog trunks enabled with an automated failsafe rollover feature, so Wayne believes they implemented the appropriate safeguards in the case of any failure of technology.

Wayne rolled this out without notifying staff, hoping it would be transparent to the end users, and luckily no one from the public or staff even noticed, the most telling sign of a successful IT initiative. People are very vocal, and whether they are complaining or praising, Wayne IT likes it most when someone just picks up a phone, they get a good quality stable connection, and they go about their business. Of course, saving a few dollars here and there also helps.