

NEW MEXICO'S COURT SYSTEM CHOOSES DIVITAS FOR MOBILE UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

Challenge

Similar to commercial businesses, the Albuquerque 13th Judicial District Court is continuously looking for ways to provide increasing value to its customers – in this case the taxpayers. Greg Ireland, CEO at the 13th Judicial District Court in Albuquerque, made the decision to focus on making mobile workers more productive. From presiding judges to probation officers, employees of the court system move about constantly. Whether they are in the field moving between the four courthouse locations or simply roaming among rooms within a single courthouse, the staff is constantly on the move. To top it off, this court system is growing rapidly. At approximately 100 employees, it has doubled its size in five years and will continue this rate of growth through 2013.

“With four separate court locations, you can imagine that every time we need to have a meeting in one location, the probability is high that the majority of attendees are going to be elsewhere, on-site at some other court,” says Greg.

The 13th Court came to realize that staying connected by voice and text (IM and email) was paramount to keeping this busy court system working efficiently. However it needed to do so at the lowest possible cost. Throwing basic cell phones at the problem was too expensive and didn't yield the required increase in availability and productivity.

“We are placing more and more people out in the field and providing them with regular cell phones – sometimes they have service, sometimes they don't, so communication was irregular. Meanwhile, the desktop phones we use cost \$800-900 per unit – it's crazy to keep buying them at that price when they don't address our need for mobility,” says Ireland. “We were interested in saving a lot of money in carrier and equipment costs, while simultaneously making our mobile employees – who represent a significant part of the court staff – more productive and accessible.”

The court runs a Trapeze wireless LAN (WLAN) for WiFi and is currently using Nokia E71 (E-series) smartphones with T-Mobile as its carrier.

Solution: DiVitas - a Cost Effective Solution for Making Highly Mobile Court Employees More Available

The 13th Judicial District Court chose to deploy DiVitas Mobile Unified Communications (Mobile UC) to help its employees stay continuously connected, regardless of where they are, while simultaneously reducing costs.

DiVitas Mobile UC capabilities combine to create a solution that dramatically increases staff productivity while reducing costs. Improved reachability streamlines business processes, meaning more work is done. In addition, DiVitas enables direct cost-cutting measures. With DiVitas, mobile workers roam seamlessly between WiFi and cellular networks. Calls are placed or received via WiFi whenever a radio signal is available. DiVitas voice over WiFi offers optimal quality that equals that of a deskphone. DiVitas users can communicate via WiFi in their work environment or in hotspots such as their home office or coffee shop – which means fewer costly cell minutes are used.



ABOUT 13TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

THE CHALLENGE

Staff constantly on the move-- between buildings and within a single courthouse

THE SOLUTION

DiVitas Mobile Unified Communications Solution improves reachability and streamlines business processes

THE BENEFITS

Employees are more reachable and productive – at the lowest cost possible

Improved employee collaboration is saving tax payers money

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“After installing the DiVitas Mobile UC solution, we have noticed a significant drop in our cell phone minute usage because we are now leveraging our WiFi network for placing and receiving calls. Our cell phone costs are going way down thanks to the DiVitas solution,” stated Ireland. The court used to pay for limited cell phone plans for its entire mobile staff, and they would each regularly go over their allowance by almost 1,000 minutes per month. “Now we are only paying for a 5,000-minute pool of minutes for eight phones and we are seeing a major savings on our cell phone costs,” continued Ireland.

Court Employees Use DiVitas to Increase Productivity and Decrease Costs

There are four primary groups of court workers currently taking advantage of the DiVitas Mobile UC solution: probation officers, judges, administrative staff and staff attorneys.

Probation Officers: Today a major part of a probation officer’s day is spent in the field monitoring their assigned cases as they move them through the court system. This is especially true with cases involving people with substance-abuse problems, as they are usually required to participate in specialized programs. In some cases, attendance may be mandatory before as well as after the individual’s hearing. The officer’s primary role is to monitor the progress of these individuals throughout the program, including, but not limited to, ensuring all appointments are kept. The less time these individuals are actively in the system the better it is for everyone.

With DiVitas, probation officers can spend time in the field while simultaneously maintaining contact with their co-workers and colleagues as though they were in the office. Using DiVitas, officers and other members of the court staff have several methods of communication available to them – each offering unique benefits.

- **Presence:** Broadcasting one’s Presence status indicates the best way to be reached: voice & text, voice-only, text-only or unavailable. This eliminates the time-consuming and costly (cell minutes) game of phone-tag, and questions get answered immediately.
- **Email or Instant Messaging (IM):** In certain conditions (i.e. in the company of others), users are more likely to respond to a text-based query than they would if voice was the only option. This heightened responsiveness naturally leads to solving a problem more quickly.
- **Single-number reach:** Because a DiVitas mobile device carries the same number as an individual’s deskphone, DiVitas users are equally reachable during working hours - whether in the office or out in the field. This single-number reach capability reduces the quantity of phone numbers callers must remember (and inboxes to manage) to guarantee connecting with another individual. And DiVitas users no longer need to provide personal cell numbers to make themselves available to select individuals – a critical privacy feature in this line of work.
- **Mobile deskphone:** Because his mobile device behaves exactly the same as his desktop phone, he can perform all of the same functions he can with his desk phone. (i.e. extension-dialing, forward a call or put a call on hold.)

Judges: The job of a judge can be deceiving. Although they may be physically presiding over a court room case, they are simultaneously participating in scenarios playing out elsewhere – even if it’s by phone, email or Instant Messaging (IM).

Because of the high degree of chance that meetings and hearing are postponed, the judges maintain three calendars. This challenge has become a daily fact of life for judges in Albuquerque’s 13th Judicial District Court, as they juggle multiple calendars and overlapping appointments. Their cases may be criminal, civil, probate or family matters, and all require varying degrees of the judge’s time and attention.

DiVitas is providing a cost-efficient means of helping judges overcome hurdles associated with their highly mobile jobs and overlapping schedules.

With DiVitas, they are able to move between locations while keeping in contact via voice, email and IM, and they also have Presence and Contacts at their fingertips. Judges can now be even more highly available, without having to lug a bunch of equipment (cell phone, laptop, and pager) with them as they roam between locations.

“DiVitas is giving our judges tools that allow them to keep their calendars going, meaning people get their cases resolved more quickly,” says Ireland. “We are now closing cases in record time, saving our taxpayers a ton of money.”

Administrative staff: DiVitas is helping the Albuquerque court system’s administrative staff (i.e. lobbyists, accountants and also judges) to get the job done more efficiently.

For example, if there is a bill going through legislation, and a surprise result comes in – such as a committee vote going in an unexpected direction or a senator suddenly asking for unexpected information – the staff needs to react fast. DiVitas allows administrative staff to contact the necessary people, regardless of where they are located when the news hits, to get the legislation pushed through.

“When it comes to legislation and the fast changes that can occur, we have to find all of our administrative staff quickly,” says Ireland. “Accountants need to do computations, we need to contact representatives and senators ...we have to be able to mobilize quickly to control the situation or we risk an outcome that we did not anticipate.”

Staff Attorneys: The 13th Judicial District Court is considered very leading edge when it comes to utilizing technology to improve efficiencies and save taxpayer dollars. One such example is the creation of a new role they call staff attorney. This position was formed to bring efficiencies to relatively straightforward cases such as the domestic category.

The staff attorney’s responsibility is to conduct free legal clinics and make sure all needed legal forms are completed properly ahead of their court date. Like judges, staff attorneys handle multiple cases simultaneously and need to be highly available in order to expedite matters. This is a highly mobile position where they leave their home court house in the morning, visit several people during the day, and return at the end of day.

“The number of “reopened” cases has plunged from 40% to 8%. A reopened case might mean something has changed and needs to be re-litigated. But more often than not it means a mistake made its way into a court order and now needs to be clarified or changed,” says Ireland

Summary

DiVitas Mobile UC makes employees more reachable and productive – at the lowest cost possible – which is solving a critical business need for Albuquerque’s 13th Judicial District Court. Budgets are tight and time is precious, but the job at hand has to be performed as efficiently as it happens in the corporate world.

Court employees across the board are highly mobile and always juggling several cases at once. The improved collaboration provided by DiVitas’ unique approach to mobilizing business voice and text – through Mobile UC – is helping to save tax payers money.

“Courts are very traditional organizations – but offering strong taxpayer value, which is what DiVitas offers, is traditional too,” says Ireland. “DiVitas is terrific for our productivity, but being able to save money is the real clincher.”

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