

LEADING BIOTECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE DEPENDS ON POWER OF OPEN SOURCE COMMUNICATIONS FROM DIGIUM



CASE STUDY

ASTERISK

Being in the right place at the right time has always paid off for the partners of Network Services and Support (NSS), and for their client, HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology. When starting a world-class biotechnology institute, it is expected that every piece of equipment will be state-of-the-art, including the phone system. For HudsonAlpha, a not-for-profit genomics-based research Institute, their knack for good timing helped them find a communications system known for its innovation and flexibility.

Perfect Timing, Perfect Partners

Scott Couch and Scott Cechovic created NSS because they saw an opportunity to fill a need in their local area for IT network support. As one of Digium's reseller partners who specializes in Switchvox, Asterisk and telephony solutions, they have continued to focus on solving IT and phone system challenges for customers of all sizes.

Being in the right place at the right time paid off for Couch and Cechovic. They were introduced to Asterisk 1.0 more than 10 years ago when the two men crossed paths with Mark Spencer, Digium founder and creator of Asterisk, the world's leading open source telephony platform. After Spencer started Digium, he asked Couch and Cechovic to look at Asterisk 1.0 and see if would be a good fit. "We realized its potential and began to deploy it as a low-cost phone system at several remote locations," Cechovic said.

“Users really like the visual voicemail feature on Digium phones. Managing voicemail is so much easier now since the users can browse messages and are not forced to sequentially play each message.”

Scott Cechovic,
Network Services
and Support

Meanwhile, Huntsville biotech entrepreneur Jim Hudson was building a state-of-the-art facility for the launch of HudsonAlpha. During the construction, HudsonAlpha employees worked temporarily in the same building as Cechovic and Couch. That co-working arrangement led to NSS taking on HudsonAlpha as a major client and they became their first large Asterisk customer.

Challenge

Jim Hudson required a robust, redundant phone system that could support multiple tenants at HudsonAlpha. Hudson also wanted local companies involved as much as possible. “We felt the Asterisk system was the perfect fit,” Cechovic said.

NSS installed an Asterisk phone system that includes a pair of active/passive call managers which handle phone registrations and internal call routing, a pair of active call gateways utilizing Asterisk DUNDi for external call routing and a pair of active/passive MySQL database/shared file servers. Going forward, any new phone or replacement phone will be a Digium handset, Cechovic said. HudsonAlpha has expanded and recently finished a third building on the 153-acre campus. It, too, will be configured with Digium IP phones to accommodate new tenants.

Results

Customers with the new Digium IP phones have had nothing but great comments, particularly citing its sound quality and clarity, Cechovic said. Next, users really like the visual voicemail feature, he said. “Managing voicemail is so much easier now since the user can browse messages and are not forced to sequentially play each message.” He also said the phone easily integrates into both Asterisk and Switchvox and no longer relies on DHCP options for proper connectivity to the PBX. Reloading contact lists is also easier, Cechovic said, as opposed to other vendors whose phones have to be rebooted to load changes to contact lists. “Overall, the phone has been well received not only by HudsonAlpha users but also by our many other customers that are now using the Digium phones,” Cechovic said.

Today, the focus of NSS is on network support services, Digium phone systems, including Asterisk and Switchvox, a business phone system based on Asterisk. “We have deployed over 100 systems, and the majority of our customers maintain support contracts with NSS for their communications needs.”



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