FAXCORE®

Case Study - Moving Fax Operations to the Cloud

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Industry

K-12 Education

Organization

Plainfield Community School Corporation—Indiana

Challenge

Reduce as many POTS lines/ phone lines as possible

Solution

FaxCore fax server combined with ETHERFAX transport in the cloud

Result/Benefits

FaxCore services have allowed PCSC to trim some of the "fat" from operational budgets in interesting ways. These kinds of savings have generally come from the migration away from copper landlines—which was the initial reason for seeking out an online fax service in the first place.

Background

Faxing remains a trusted, secure and reliable means for transmitting documents. Fax machines and phone lines are not the most cost effective ways to send and receive faxes. With multi-function printers (MFPs) and customized ATAs it is possible to send and receive faxes without phone lines. FaxCore's fax server can enable MFPs, legacy fax machines and desktop PCs while eliminating fax lines.

Leveraging Modern Communications Tools

One of the most powerful solutions a company can leverage, online faxing, can be used in a variety of different institutions. Education is a good example of a field where modern technology can make a difference.

There are many reasons why companies seek out an online fax service, and many of them are also applicable for places like schools. Educational facilities often deal with a wide variety of situations and data - much of it sensitive and important. This is one reason why faxing is still required in schools. From financial records to student health files, there is a need for secure document transmission.

Many forms of communication are being moved away from copper channels and onto IP lines. Voice is the most obvious example of this, with VoIP - voice over IP - being a hot topic of conversation. But faxing over IP - FoIP - has also been recognized as a powerful, modern tool that schools can benefit from. This is why the Plainfield Community School Corporation in Indiana turned to FaxCore when their landline fax capabilities were no longer cutting it.

"The Indiana Department of Education still requires faxes for certain things," said PCSC technology director John Crum. "A lot of doctor's' offices that we interact with for our special education people are dealing with practices that require faxes one way or the other. Our faxing needs have dwindled over time but its still an important piece of operations."

The implementation of online fax services within PCSC has, according to Crum, been a success thus far. Everything is working the way it was expected, and then some with the intended switch from "plain old telephone service" lines occurring at an expedited rate. eliminating fax lines.

How It Started

The relationship between FaxCore and PCSC came to be through Sharp USA. In addition to hardware, Sharp also provides various services, hardware and software solutions like PaperCut, which is a print management program used by the Plainfield school district. Sharp has been working with FaxCore specifically for about five years. After management of their old fax partner changed hands and support began to deteriorate, Sharp found a powerful ally in FaxCore. They have since been working together to enable clients to modernize their fax systems, with people like application specialist Erin Brashears helping to bring FaxCore capabilities to a software-defined environment that can reside on physical machines.

When Brashears learned PCSC was going to be switching over to an IP faxing system, she saw her chance to provide it with a superior solution. "I called the customer and kind of talked through what they had done so far," Brashears said. "They had pretty much gone all the way down the pike and they were getting ready to implement a product called eFax."

The difference between the two comes down to incoming versus outgoing messages. Faxes being received would go through eFax, but sending would have required landlines to continue being used. Essentially, the system would have been in two different places, as Brashears put it. Going with FaxCore helped to keep everything singular and simplified - which is Sharp's overall goal and why they opted to partner with FaxCore in the first place. While PCSC doesn't use Sharp hardware in their offices, Brashears said that their choice to stick with Ricoh did not deter her from the task of optimizing operations for the good of the client. She said that Sharp's "guiding principle" is that they "sacrifice any short-term gain for a long-term relationship" - something that FaxCore can get behind 100 percent.

"It was somewhat interesting, because with Ricoh, they weren't really talking to Plainfield about how to better their environment using their assets, and we came in and talked to them about how to better their environment using competitive assets," Brashears said. "Because for us, we just want to be able to help the client in any way that we can, and hopefully that earns a better right down the road for equipment, as well."

The Results

In July of 2014, PCSC gradually began porting their numbers over on a trial run. By September, the transition was complete.

Security Effectively Addressed with FaxCore

In any profession, there is likely some kind of information involved that needs to be kept private. Faxing has normally been the solution in these instances. But as a growing number of people prefer to use their smartphones to access data on the go, the traditional fax machine has started to age poorly. The response to this development is online faxing like the kind made possible by FaxCore.

Some people are skeptical of modern technology. Cybersecurity horror stories are a dime a dozen, but much of the fear they create can often be chalked up to media hysteria. Crum said that there was some opposition initially to his online fax initiative, but his answers satisfied those concerned. The idea that faxes, which would normally sit as hard copies in semi-public areas, would now be protected by strong digital encryption provided by FaxCore was enough to quell many naysayers.

Crum specifically cited FaxCore's security as a reason why it was selected over other VoIP and FoIP companies that he spoke with. The ease with which FaxCore solutions were put into place and the immediate operational advantages they provided helped to push the pace of pilot programs along much faster than Crum expected.

Security Effectively Addressed with FaxCore (continued)

"After having all of those different conversations, we felt comfortable with [FaxCore], so we set up a pilot program, tried it out on a couple of our lines and decided that was going to work for us and slowly started to implement it," Crum stated. "I really didn't plan on having things implemented at this point, to be honest, but as we got into the school year and had more and more problems with fax machines either failing or problems with our copper lines that we decided to accelerate that process and get them all moved over."

Online Fax Means Huge Cost Savings

Another common issue for schools and educational services is funding. Money seems to be constantly slipping through the cracks when it comes to academic organizations, and any way to effectively cut costs is a welcome notion. According to Crum, FaxCore services have allowed PCSC to trim some of the fat from operational budgets in interesting ways. These kinds of savings have generally come from the migration away from copper landlines - which was Crum's initial reason for seeking out an online fax service in the first place.

"The whole reason we really went this route is we wanted to reduce as many POTS lines, or phone lines, as possible," Crum said. "So, that's kind of where our conversation really started - moving to a hosted voice over IP system and wanting to eliminate as many of the old copper lines as possible. The AT&Ts of the world really don't want to service those copper lines anymore - they're going to get more and more expensive and more and more frustrating to fix. So we figure we're better off reducing our usage there."

But there are other ways that FoIP can save money. For one thing, the amount of funding allotted for paper can be drastically reduced. Not only does faxing over the Internet mean fewer printed pages and a decrease in toner usage, but the removal of outdated fax machines combined with the privileged access of FaxCore systems means that there are fewer personal transmissions being made on the company's time and dime. Crum mentioned in his security argument that PCSC fax machines were located in areas where they could easily be accessed by unauthorized parties. He directly links FaxCore to the immediate savings that have been felt as a result of faxing through online portals rather than on siloed, outdated endpoints. This kind of benefit is something that Crum was able to predict before moving to FaxCore, and was ultimately a big reason for the push away from landlines.

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"Obviously, there's some set-up cost involved and one-time fees up front, but it's pretty easy to look at the bottom line - what your ongoing, recurring costs are year-to-year," Crum said. "In our case, it was real easy for me to say 'this is what we pay per copper line' before getting into the cost of the toner and the paper and show us savings over time. It was pretty simple math."

Brashears echoed this sentiment when talking about another client currently switching over to FaxCore. The customer's landlines are running them about $30 dollars a month, per connection. Multiply that by more than 40 lines in use and costs run into the thousands of dollars annually. But with FaxCore, this kind of spending is completely eliminated. That money can be easily routed into areas of greater need.

The Ease and Power of FaxCore

Overall, Crum is very satisfied with the performance that FaxCore assets have provided to PCSC. He referred to this past summer's pilot program and eventual, official implementation as "a consistent, successful product launch" with a scarce number of problems or errors past the primary installation.

"Brashears said that the training required to get teachers and other staffers up to speed is significantly reduced with FaxCore solutions, which means less time getting the hang of things and greater levels of productivity. Crum even said that the deployment has been so effective that he sees the addition of further FaxCore lines for other areas of PCSC that have not been included in the transition as of yet.

According to Brashears, this is the kind of task that the Sharp/FaxCore partnership will be able to handle effortlessly. "It's really easy for us to switch out equipment - a box is really a box, right? At the end of the day, they're spitting out prints and faxes and scans and those types of things," Brashears said. "It's how we ultimately help them leverage those assets in their environment that adds value, and we're doing that by putting in software already."

Chances are that developments of this nature aren't very far away for PCSC. Crum anticipates only finding more instances around the organization where FaxCore services will be of great value.

"[The transition has] been pretty seamless. ... It's working well," Crum said. "Faxes are getting where they need to be."

Brashears said that while this is the first instance of Sharp and FaxCore implementing their solutions in K-12 school systems, she believes that it will not be the last. If there is one industry where faxing needs to be optimized and streamlined rather than abandoned all together, it's education.

Enhance enterprise communication, collaboration and compliance efforts with a proven FoIP solution from FaxCore. Contact FaxCore today to learn more about their 'Partly-Cloudy' fax solutions. sales@faxcore.com, **www.faxcore.com** or **+1 (720) 870-2900.**