



Customer Case Study

Deploying Unified Messaging at the University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota (U of M) is one of the most comprehensive public universities in the United States and ranks among the most prestigious. It is the second largest campus in the U.S. and home to 55,000+ students and nearly 19,000 staff and faculty members. All the primary programs of the University are based on the single campus, but there are smaller branch schools statewide. It is one of the most highly competitive state schools. The U of M is a land grant university with a strong tradition of education and public service as well as the state's primary research university with faculty of national and international reputation.

Land grant status is very significant to the U of M as it positions and funds the institution to provide services beyond those of other state or city colleges and universities in the area. Land grant schools are designated by Congress to receive government funding to establish an agricultural experiment station. The state matches a major portion of federal funds. For the U of M, this amounts to a sizeable funding base for the delivery of services to the community and state economy.

The U of M's substantial telecommunications department is part of the Office of Information Technology and is called the Networking and Telecommunications Services (NTS) team. NTS provides all manner of telecommunications services, including includes services to

- Dorms and administrators on campus
- Remote sites connected via a diverse set of services
- Affiliated University branches, such as Fairview Hospital, the Academic Health Center, University of Minnesota Physicians
- University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, located 25 miles southwest of the Twin Cities in Chaska, Minnesota



Why a New System

The Networking and Telecommunications Services (NTS) team needed to replace its system. The existing vendor no longer supported the old system; thus it was not feasible to add new capabilities. In addition, NTS was challenged by the existing system's aging architecture. With the system falling out of support, it was difficult to acquire software revision help when new problems were identified or when hardware failed. It was

plainly evident that the University needed a new voice mail system.

Population New System will Serve

The new system would mainly serve faculty, administrators and employees. Four thousand residence hall students had once been on the system but the administration elected to have them removed in order to keep housing costs down. In selecting a new system though, the possibility of voicemail services returning to the students in the future had to be kept in consideration.

Requirements to be Addressed by the New Voice Mail System

The team set out to look for a new system that would provide a stable and future-friendly voicemail architecture, one that would not require a steep operational support or user learning curve. It needed to be seamless and easy for faculty and staff, since most were resistant to

investing time and effort into hours of training sessions. Users wanted a simple and straightforward voice mail system that would work well for them. Some of the new features required included:

- a. Personal assistant – called “zero escape” – to be set up by the user
- b. More greeting options – Inside greeting and outside greetings
- c. Easier access to multiple mailboxes
- d. Web interface – with many embedded features

Establishing the New System

Following extensive research of its options and a full competitive RFP process, NTS selected Movius' Unified Messaging solution. The company installed two Mereon 6000 Media Servers, as well as Unified Messaging applications software. The carrier-grade nature of the Movius platform was selected to support the university's projected high call volumes and provide the innovative features it needs for its research, instructional and staff communities of interest going forward. To provide additional backup the University chose to install the two media servers at two distinct locations on the campus for redundancy and disaster recovery purposes.



The initial deployment of Unified Messaging, known on campus as Gopher Messaging, was completed during the first wave of service rollout, in 2006. The Mereon 6000 now interfaces with the University of Minnesota's existing Intecom Pointspan 6880 PBX with six IPNs. This integrated system provides telephone service for the entire Twin Cities campus, including the geographically separate St. Paul campus. Additionally, a separate VoIP telephone system is integrated into the University's voice infrastructure and also utilizes the enhanced features of the Movius solution.

Prior to cutting over to the new system, the NTS team implemented a complete communications plan designed to make sure that every voicemail user on campus was aware of the coming change. Key components of the plan were:

- a. A desktop training/orientation program that incorporated a narrated PowerPoint presentation was created using Breeze software. This multimedia presentation clearly explained why the change was occurring and key benefits to the users.
- b. Town hall meetings on the new system were held at various times and locations to explain why the change was taking place.
- c. Constant communication to the users took place to make sure everyone knew the system was being cutover. Voicemail users received multiple postcards, emails, voice mails, and letters. Two mailings were sent with collateral and information on setting up their new voice mailboxes.
- d. A well trained and fully staffed helpline was established to assist users with setting up their mailboxes.
- e. An early adopter group was formed to test the system prior to cutover, as well as a pilot program with the University's Office of Information Technology to flush out and address any service issues before full cutover.
- f. Positioning of the Unified Messaging system as the 'new Voice Messaging Solution' was a key component of the plan prior to cutover. This campaign helped to diminish user fears about massive changes to a system that was very familiar and comfortable to users. After cutover the service was re-branded as Gopher Messaging and follow-up information was distributed about the advantages of Unified Messaging.

Cutover involved bringing almost 19,000 administrators, faculty and staff onto the new service platform over the course of a single day. Thirty days prior to the cutover, users were encouraged to log into their new voice mailbox through the telephone user interface and then the online site, in order to set up their new mailboxes parameters. The day before the cut, over 70% of the users had completed their account setup. During conversion a system wide message was sent to all users to remind them to set up their passwords. After the first week, all passwords on the mailboxes that had not been set up were reset and users had to call in to the help desk to activate their web account.

Once cutover took place, un-initialized users had to go through the TUI (Telephone User Interface) to set up their password, greeting and name on the voice mail system. They also had the option to go into the web interface to enable advanced features. Once those actions were completed they had two choices: 1) use Plain Old Voice Mail only (POVM) or 2) utilize Unified Messaging, which includes a host of features for accessing voicemail, email and faxes via a web interface.

A large number of users preferred to stay with POVM. These included individuals who used computers but were content with simple voice messaging and/ or who had assistants to help screen incoming calls. Many faculty and technologists on campus opted for Unified Messaging.

Key Benefits of the new system

As noted, some faculty members and technologists on staff transitioned to the new system easily. Applications included in the University's initial deployment were Unified Messaging, Fax, Text-to-Speech and Find Me – Follow Me. Some of the advanced functional benefits of the Movius implementation:

- One-stop Message Access: All messages (email, voicemail, faxes) are available via graphical and telephone user interfaces (GUI and TUI) as well as web mail; users can receive message delivery to any phone or multimedia service (MMS) delivery device.
- Personalized Availability: Find Me – Follow Me allows a subscriber to provide callers with the convenience of one number to reach their cell phone, desk phone, home phone or any phone of their choice. With unique call screening, the subscriber can select which calls they will accept and which they will choose to forward to the fully-featured voice mail service
- “Click-to-Call” Functionality: enables outdialing to be controlled directly from a PC-based address book: with just one click, the system calls the subscriber's phone and then calls the destination number.
- “Click-to-Conference” Functionality: enables instant web/audio conferencing with multiple parties, initiated directly from the personal distribution list in the subscriber's address book.

One key user group is the auditors and attorneys on campus, who have embraced Unified Messaging capability for receiving faxes. These users now have the benefit of faxes electronically stored with a time and date stamp, which can be used for tracking. Faxes with highly confidential and sensitive material no longer sit around in public fax machine trays, open to public scrutiny—they are accessible only through password-protected email. The University General Counsel's HIPAA requirements for information security are helped by the Unified Messaging system.

Also critical in the new system has been the ability to provide Auto Attendant services. A large portion of the services provided by the Networking and Telecommunications Services group are ACD/ Auto-attendant services to various departments within and outside the university campus. These functions are charged back to the individual departments by the team, and thus provide revenues to NTS that help defray operating expenses.