

Microsoft Office System Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: JLC Southeast
Website: www.jlcsoutheast.com
Customer Size: 450 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Professional services
Partner: NSPI

Customer Profile

Founded in 1955 and headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, JLC Southeast owns and manages more than 15,000 apartment and condominium units in seven states.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 Standard
 - Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 R2
 - Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 Standard

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Real-Estate Management Firm Saves \$150,000 Yearly with Unified Communications

“By replacing an Avaya-based solution with a Microsoft Unified Communications solution, we anticipate saving more than \$150,000 each year in IT and other operational costs.”

Dan Ma Gill, Director of Information Technology, JLC Southeast

JLC Southeast needed a powerful and cost-effective communications solution, but its Avaya-based system turned out to be neither. So it turned instead to a Microsoft Unified Communications solution, based largely on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2. Today, JLC Southeast looks forward to saving U.S.\$150,000 a year in IT and travel costs, provides employees a more accommodating work environment, and has established a strong foundation for growth.

Business Needs

Founded in 1955 and known originally as Julian LeCraw & Company, JLC Southeast is one of the largest privately owned multifamily real-estate organizations in the southeastern United States. JLC Southeast handles development, management, acquisitions, construction, and value-add renovations of commercial, residential, and mixed-use properties in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, with a special focus on investment and management of multifamily residential properties. JLC Southeast owns and manages more than 15,000 apartment and condominium units in those states, and anticipates growing that number to 25,000 units by 2012.

JLC Southeast has long relied on advanced communications technology to simplify collaboration in a workforce that is distributed among more than 50 separate properties in four states. In a challenging economy, however, companies like JLC Southeast need communications technologies that are both advanced *and* cost-effective. And in recent years, the company's telephony solution, based on the Avaya Definity R12 phone system, turned out to be neither.

“When we first installed the Avaya-based solution it was novel, but after five years of operation, we realized that the solution did not provide the growth path we needed,”



says Dan Ma Gill, Director of Information Technology at JLC Southeast. "We needed a flexible way to add functionality, but found it prohibitively expensive to upgrade selected parts of the solution."

Solution

Because of mounting pressure to expand capabilities and reduce costs, JLC Southeast had no choice but to replace its Avaya-based solution. Shortly before the license for that solution expired, Ma Gill saw a demonstration of the Microsoft Unified Communications solution, based largely on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2, and decided that it was the answer to the company's communications challenges. With the help of Judy Davis, Partner Development Manager at Microsoft Gold Certified Partner NSPI, Ma Gill installed Office Communications Server 2007 R2 Standard and Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 Standard email messaging and collaboration software on four servers and 250 client computers. The deployment includes Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 R2 and Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007, as well as the installation of new telephony and conferencing hardware.

With this deployment, Ma Gill and his colleagues are now considering their next move, to a communications solution based on Microsoft Lync Server 2010. "We are impressed by the Attendant Console and E-911 presence awareness in Lync 2010," Ma Gill says. "We will definitely be evaluating that product for a possible migration in the future."

Benefits

JLC Southeast enjoys significant benefits from having deployed the Microsoft Unified Communications solution. These benefits include anticipated reductions in IT and

travel expenses, an enhanced reputation for customer service, a more accommodating work environment for employees, and a foundation for continued growth.

Annual Savings of \$150,000 in IT and Travel Costs

"By replacing an Avaya-based solution with a Microsoft Unified Communications solution, we anticipate saving more than [U.S.]\$150,000 each year in IT and other operational costs," Ma Gill says. On the IT side, the company has already saved more than \$100,000 by replacing its Primary Rate Interface and T-1 circuits with a Session Initiation Protocol connection and has eliminated recurring costs associated with handset leasing, third-party audio-conferencing services, and a costly video-conferencing system.

On the business side, JLC Southeast will save roughly \$50,000 each year in travel expenses. "Portfolio managers who used to visit the sites routinely to meet with property managers are now meeting through web conferencing," Ma Gill says. "Executives who used to fly to regional meetings over a dozen times a month have reduced those visits to one or two, conferring instead through video conferencing."

Enhanced Support for Customers and Employees

For Ma Gill, the qualitative benefits of the Microsoft Unified Communications solution are equally impressive. "With such a distributed workforce and the odd hours that are typical in this industry, it's vital that employees know when colleagues are available," he says. "Using presence awareness, a portfolio manager, for example, can easily see when a property

manager is available to confer on matters from budgets to unit repairs. This helps us to resolve problems sooner, enhancing our reputation for customer service."

JLC Southeast employees also enjoy a more flexible work environment. "By simply installing Office Communicator 2007 R2 on some employees' home computers, we are enabling them to work from home and avoid the daily commute," Ma Gill says. "Working from home is a huge advantage for employees in Atlanta, where traffic is routinely rated as the third or fourth worst in the country."

Making life easier for employees provides a direct benefit for the company, as well. "In a tight economy we cannot always offer raises to our top talent, people who have seen our company through these challenging times," Ma Gill explains. "But we can offer them a more accommodating work environment, and telecommuting is central to that."

Solid Foundation for Growth

JLC Southeast can make life easier for new employees—those working at recently acquired properties—as well, through collaboration supported by the desktop-sharing capability in Office Communicator 2007 R2.

"Before, only a couple of us in IT could share desktops remotely, but now practically anyone at JLC Southeast can do this, for collaborating with fellow employees on various projects without having to travel," Ma Gill says. "We can be 'there,' in a sense, helping smooth the transition for employees at the new properties. And the smoother that transition, the easier it is for JLC Southeast to continue its successful growth trajectory."