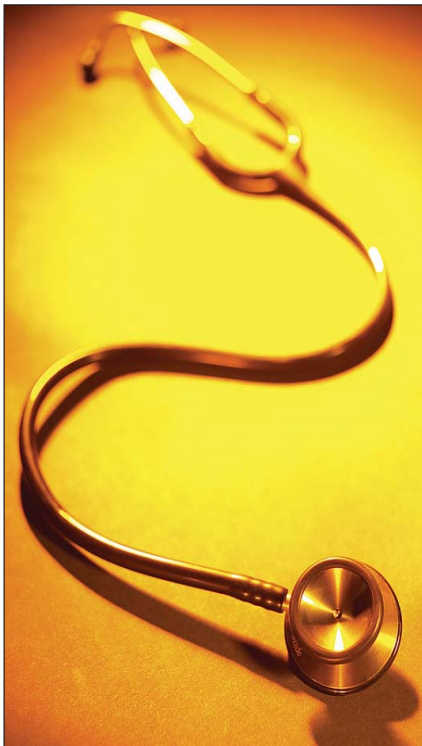# Technology Wellness Program

Verteks Consulting ensures the good health of vital voice and data systems for Integrity Home Health Care.

In ancient China, physicians were paid only when their clients were well, encouraging them to take proactive measures to ensure good health rather than to reactively treat disease. Verteks Consulting takes a similar approach to the well-being of its clients' voice and data systems. Verteks doesn't just resolve technical problems but works hard to keep networks healthy.

Integrity Home Health Care can attest to the business benefits of this wellness program. When Integrity out-

> **"Verteks stayed on top of everything, and it was really seamless."**

grew its network in 2006, Verteks worked with the firm to develop a technology plan that would serve Integrity's needs for several years. The plan included a new server, a new backup solution, some new desktops and a new telephone system.

It wasn't as simple as ripping out the old and putting in the new, however. Verteks had to keep the old systems running during the planning and budgeting process, and implement the new systems without impacting Integrity's day-to-day operations.

"Toward the end we had maxed out our server hard drive, which made the system increasingly unstable. Verteks came in periodically to clean off the old server and keep it running," said Sherry Teague, CFO and co-owner of Integrity Home Health Care. "I can't stress enough how helpful they were throughout the whole process, particularly from a small business perspective. It takes time to line up your financing

and get all of your ducks in a row, but Verteks brought in technicians to make sure that we stayed up and running through the switch."

Taking the Pulse

The new server brought Integrity Home Health Care up to date with the Microsoft Windows Server 2003 operating system, and the new tape backup system made nightly backup processes much more efficient. Teague says that network performance has improved and the systems are much more stable. What's more, Integrity was able to take advantage of these benefits immediately thanks to Verteks' strong project planning and hands-on approach.

"They took care of everything, and provided training before the install, during the install and then afterwards," Teague said. "I'm not a computer person by background, but they were very straightforward in how they explained everything ahead of time and made it very user-friendly for us. And the best part was, we were never down."

Achieving that healthy outcome required not only technical know-how but keeping a finger on the pulse of Integrity's needs. Verteks took the initiative to keep the project plan on track so that Integrity's management team could focus on their growing business.

"During the time of the switchover we went from 35 to 45 employees and I was pretty fractured," Teague said. "Verteks stayed on top of everything, and it was really seamless."

The Right Prescription

After the new server was in place, Verteks implemented a new 3Com NBX phone system for Integrity Home Health Care. Integrity had a traditional phone system but had maxed out its voicemail system. The 3Com IP telephony system gives everyone in the organization voicemail and provides other key features.

"Verteks showed us the 3Com system, and it was everything that we needed. Plus it was an easy switch for our staff. All the information you need is right there on the desktop," Teague said. "One of the hardest things about learning a new phone system is to have to read a book in order to figure out a feature. With this system you just pull up the help right on the computer."

The IP phone system has a computer interface that makes administration very easy. It also provides reports that enable management to track things such as voicemail usage.

"Our staff had not been using voice mail at all since we didn't have enough voicemail boxes. Now we're trying to encourage them to use it," Teague said. "One of the nice features of this system is the ability to track voicemail usage. We can see who has voice mails in their box and when was the last time they checked it."

Of course, anything that makes things easier for patients is of primary value to Integrity Home Health Care. Co-owner and Patient Care Liaison Cara Fitzgerald says that the new system makes paging and call management much easier.

"Before, our on-call system was just a straight call forward. Now we're able to set up a directory that gives the patients more choices when they call in after hours," she said. "All of our decisions are based on what's good for our patient and our employees. The new technology Verteks has implemented for us saves our patients and employees time and aggravation."

Ensuring Good Health

The story doesn't end with the implementation. Verteks has maintained Integrity's systems since 2002 and continues to provide ongoing support.

"They've been Johnny-on-the-spot, literally, anytime we've needed them," Teague said. "Everyone from Verteks who's come out here has been extremely friendly and oriented toward customer service. We've worked with them since 2002 and I have nothing but positive things to say about them."

The Verteks team has even gone above and beyond the call of duty, troubleshooting problems that had nothing to do with the technology or the implementation.

"Our phone system has gone down twice since it's been installed, and in both cases it was caused by a cut wire due to construction on State Route 40," Teague said. "It wasn't Verteks' problem but both times they took the lead in calling our telecom service providers and making sure we were top priority."

Ocala, Fla., is a long way from ancient China's imperial court. However, the philosophy of wellness that guided the doctor/patient relationship back then serves well to illustrate Verteks' approach to technology. With Verteks as a partner, businesses can count on the good health and longevity of their voice and data systems.

Going Mobile

Survey indicates SMBs more willing to invest in mobile data solutions.

After years of lagging behind large corporations, small to midsize businesses (SMBs) are poised for major investment and adoption of mobile data services to help increase their workforce productivity. According to a new Yankee Group survey, 60 percent of all small business owners have already implemented or are planning on deploying a mobile data solution over a cellular network.

"Constant connectivity is crucial for small and medium-sized companies, especially in today's fast-paced environment," said Russell Morgan, president of the non-profit Information Technology Solution Providers Alliance (ITSPA). "Data communications provided through cellular networks gives business owners the capability to be in touch anywhere they have cell phone coverage and anytime that their mobile phones are on. But the many device, network and service options available mean that small business owners need to become more savvy about the capabilities they are looking for and the best ways to implement them for full integration with the rest of their technology."

Access to e-mail is the top reason why SMBs are moving toward mobile data solutions, but they tend to differ from enterprises on the best platform for achieving their goals. While enterprise organizations are heavy adopters of Wi-Fi, or "hot spot," wireless technology for mobile access to the network, the overwhelming choice of SMBs is the conventional mobile phone with data capabilities.

"In the battle between sleek cell phones and bulkier PDAs, the phone continues to win with small companies," said Morgan. "When faced with a choice, people would rather carry a mobile phone with data capabilities than make phone calls from a hand-held computer."

A Good Call

VoIP *proving worthy of inclusion in disaster recovery scenarios.*

Voice over IP (VoIP) hasn't always been thought of as being valuable in a disaster. Many people have considered the Internet-based communication technology to be a bit fragile — after all, if the power goes out and kills the Internet connection, the phone system becomes useless, right?

Not necessarily.

VoIP communication systems coupled with backup power solutions, batteries or portable generators have recently proved their worth in emergency situations. The beauty of VoIP in a disaster is that the decentralized design of the Internet was specifically meant to accommodate routing disasters. Anyone with a VoIP phone and a broadband connection can establish communications when wired telephone lines are out of commission.

Lessons from Katrina

In the wake of the devastating impact to communications resulting from recent natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Kevin J. Martin called for communications systems that are capable of rapid deployment and/or restoration, and for the use of multiple, flexible technologies in a truly mobile infrastructure. Internet communication technologies such as VoIP can play a significant role in that effort, Martin said.

"I would also like to see a greater use of IP technologies that are capable of changing and rerouting telecommunications traffic," Martin recently told members of an independent FCC panel reviewing the impact of Hurricane Kat-

rina on communications networks. "In the event of a systems failure within the traditional network, such IP technologies would enable service to be restored more quickly and would provide the flexibility to initiate service at new locations chosen by consumers."

Following Katrina, many organizations learned first-hand that VoIP's flexibility can make it an important element of a disaster recovery communications plan. The ability to set up VoIP services on the fly, from any network, proved to be critical in an emergency. For instance, New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin's first communication with President Bush took place over a VoIP connection. The unique mobility and decentralized aspects of VoIP also were utilized by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Red Cross, hospitals, emergency responders, telethon call centers and utility workers who were restoring service.

Baton Rouge General Hospital, for example, still had a broadband connection after the hurricane but no long distance. The hospital used nine VoIP converters and wireless-enabled

laptops with VoIP softphones installed to establish long-distance communications and to set up a public branch exchange for communications within the hospital and sharing patient data.

The Red Cross equipped a fleet of SUVs with IP communications equipment and VSAT (very small aperture terminal) antennas for satellite communications. With Wi-Fi equipment, VoIP phones and wireless laptops, each vehicle became a mobile communications center and in some areas of New Orleans provided the only voice communication available. The Army used satellite as the Internet link for a VoIP network that transmitted terrestrially on National Guard Internet bandwidth.

Portability and Mobility

From a business standpoint, the most attractive benefit of IP phones is their portability. Following Katrina, there were numerous examples of business users who unplugged phones from the main office and then plugged them back into broadband connections in hotel rooms, branch offices or relatives' homes and were almost immedi-

ately back in business. In addition to regaining communication, they also gained access to all the information the office phone system provided, including directory or customer information.

This mobility allows organizations to leverage the growing number of mobile and home-based workers to provide an effective hedge against a disaster-stricken headquarters. The number of telecommuters and home-based workers are expected to continue rising over the next few years, according to IDC Research. By 2009, 10 million U.S. workers, or 10 percent of its workforce, will be telecommuting. Laptops equipped with VoIP softphones allow these remote workers to quickly re-establish the communications network and remain productive following a disaster.

Yet, VoIP is only useful in disaster scenarios if organizations have made the proper plans in advance. Have key employees been equipped and trained with the technology they need to remain connected? A softphone installed on a laptop isn't much use if the employee doesn't know how to use it.

In addition, organizations must ensure their networks are prepared to handle a spike in VoIP traffic. Traffic across IP networks will increase dramatically in a crisis as people turn to external Web sites and generate increasing quantities of e-mail traffic, in addition to making and receiving IP phone calls. Bandwidth and capacity planning processes must be in place to ensure that critical services such as voice are not degraded during high-traffic conditions.

There should also be sufficient redundancy built into the network and systems to accommodate any component failure without losing voice services. This means redundant switches, call managers, gateways and routers. Circuits that connect the organization to the public telephone network or to other locations within the organization's network must also have some redundancy to ensure high availability.

Communication is always an essential element of day-to-day business operations, but it is particularly vital during a crisis. The flexible nature of VoIP technology makes it a valuable component of a comprehensive business continuity plan — provided organizations have made the proper plans up front.

"Often the biggest challenge in actual disasters is the lack of available and flexible communication systems," said Steve Hailey, senior consultant, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, Avaya. "Governments and businesses can no longer afford to let disaster communication systems be something nice to have — these are a must-have."

Serving Up
Business Benefits

Verteks helps organizations take advantage of Windows Small Business Server to help boost efficiency, improve information access and enable collaboration.

Many small to midsize businesses (SMBs) resist their first server purchase, putting off as long as possible what they view as a potentially costly, complex process. Today, however, there are affordable server solutions that are easy to implement and maintain — even for organizations without in-house IT staff.

A server is a computer with specialized software that provides a central point for sharing Internet access, files and peripheral equipment. Servers are also used to host Web sites and e-mail, enable collaboration, and enhance data protection and security.

In the past, servers were used only by larger organizations because of their high cost and complexity. However, companies that deploy Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 soon find they have been missing out on a world of business potential. Packed with functionality, Windows Small Business Server 2003 is ideal for small businesses — especially those buying their first server.

"Windows Small Business Server 2003 enables small businesses to do more with their existing resources,"

said Don Gulling, President of Verteks Consulting. "It's a complete, affordable, reliable solution that improves productivity, information access, communication and collaboration, both internally and with customers and suppliers."

Growing Demand

The need to better connect with customers as well as increase efficiency and lower costs is compelling more SMBs to move from a peer-to-peer network to a client/server network. Based on a series of studies commissioned by Microsoft, IDC estimates that more than 600,000 first-server deployments will be conducted in small businesses between 2005 and 2009 in the U.S. alone. Globally, more than 1 million installations are expected during the same time period.

"Server technology is not a luxury that's available only for large companies with equally large budgets and specialized IT staff," said Steven Van-Roekel, director of the Windows Server Solutions Group at Microsoft. "With Windows Small Business Server 2003, customers can afford to meet their increasing needs for better securi-

ty, organization and access. And with the help of an IT partner, they can also ensure that this doesn't add complexity to everyday business."

Windows Small Business Server 2003 provides small businesses with many of the same features used by large enterprises — e-mail, secure Internet connectivity, business intranets, remote connectivity, support for mobile devices, file and printer sharing, backup and restore capabilities, and an application platform for collaboration — all in a package that is inexpensive and easy to deploy and maintain.

Gulling points to three value propositions that make Windows Small Business Server 2003 ideal for SMBs: competitive pricing, a high return on investment (ROI), and the mix of technologies that are pre-integrated in the product and optimized for small businesses to operate seamlessly out of the box.

"Windows Small Business Server integrates key Microsoft product suites, include Exchange Server 2003, Windows SharePoint Services, Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Workgroup Edition and Microsoft Internet

and Security Acceleration Server 2004," Gulling said. "These technologies can help take a small business to the next level without adding layers of IT complexity."

Security, Mobility and More

The latest release of this award-winning product, Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2, delivers increased security through the "Green Check" of software health. Windows Server Update Services automates network-wide patch and update management, and provides daily reports on the status of desktops and servers running Microsoft software.

Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 customers can also take advantage of new mobility benefits after integration with Windows Mobile-based devices, such as direct push technology, which enables near real-time access to information in Microsoft Office Outlook. Password policy management and remote device wipe enhance protection of data.

For Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 Premium Edition customers, SQL Server 2005 Workgroup Edition provides a powerful, integrated data management and reporting solution. With features such as Management Studio, import/export functionality, limited replication publishing and backup log-shipping, it is the ideal choice for organizations that need an affordable full-size database.

"SMBs are increasingly demanding technology that will allow them to efficiently and cost-effectively protect their data, appear more professional and work from anywhere," Gulling said. "Windows Small Business Server 2003 gives them the tools they need to gain competitive advantage."

Do the math...

<u>1</u> wire for all your voice and data needs
<u>1</u> system ties together all of your locations
<u>1</u> wise investment that increases employee productivity

<u>1</u> + <u>1</u> + <u>1</u> = The <u>3Com</u> family
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The 3Com NBX V3000 platform provides the benefits of convergence applications to enterprises with from 2 to 200 users and up to 1,500 devices. It eliminates the cost and administrative overhead required for separate voice and data networks and affordably improves communications with powerful built-in call-processing, messaging and reporting features. Call today to learn how you can trade-in your old voice system and take advantage of these powerful capabilities.

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