VERTEKS CONNECTION

VERTEKS
VOICE & DATA NETWORKS

Technology's Best Friend

Verteks helps Millhopper Veterinary Medical Center transition to a new practice management application while keeping the office's systems and network purring.

Millhopper Veterinary Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla., doesn't pussyfoot around when it comes to technology. Faced with the need to upgrade its IDEXX VetConnect practice management software, Dr. David Menard, DVM, called upon Verteks Consulting to oversee the project. Dr. Menard recognized the value of having experienced engineers available locally to support the clinic.

"When we were ready to implement new practice software, we called on Verteks to help with that," said Dr. Menard. "We purchased most of our hardware through the software vendor but Verteks was able to assist with installation. The Verteks engineers came in and interfaced with the software vendor and helped to get all the hardware on the network. They made sure everything was working properly."

Dr. Menard had previously gone through an upgrade of his practice management software at his Paddock Park Animal Care Center in Ocala. That time, he allowed the software vendor to turnkey the entire project. He learned that the software vendor

was focused primarily on its application and not the overall requirements of the business.

"The last time Dr. Menard made such a transition, IDEXX performed the project with no outside help, and the clinic experienced downtime. Working with Veteks provided a much smoother transition," said Pete Kamay, Account Manager, Verteks Consulting. "We coordinated with the software provider to install a new server and new workstations. We supported the transition from the old software to the new, minimizing downtime on all facets of the business."

Barking Up the Right Tree

A veterinary practice is, of course, a high-touch business. But like most organizations, Millhopper Veterinary Medical Center and Paddock Park Animal Care Center rely heavily upon technology for their operations. Verteks plays a key role in helping this new breed of veterinary practice get the most from its technology infrastructure.

Verteks has developed a strong relationship with Dr. Menard and a thorough understanding of his business needs. In addition to providing ongoing support, Verteks has the ability to assist with major software transitions and upgrades, keeping in mind all of the company's technology requirements, not just one application.

"When we decided to go with the same software vendor we had used in Ocala in the new location in Gainesville, we realized we needed to do things a little differently. That's why we called Verteks," said Dr. Menard. "Verteks got our network up and running, and made sure all the systems could 'talk' to each other. This was the first time we had them involved in interfacing between the software company and the hardware, and it was a big help."

Verteks has also helped Dr. Menard take advantage of technologies that can help increase efficiency. Verteks implemented a wireless network and a tablet device that gives Dr. Menard mobility throughout the clinic. Dr. Menard was so pleased with the solution that he asked Verteks to deploy additional tablets for his staff.

"The Verteks team is not only knowledgeable — they treat me as a valued customer," he said. "When they recommend new solutions, they do so with the best interests of my practice in mind. I have a great deal of trust and confidence in their ability to meet the needs of my business."

Loyal Companion

Just as regular checkups are important for Dr. Menard's furry patients, preventive maintenance helps ensure that the computer systems in both veterinary practices stay up and running. Verteks provides ongoing support to make sure Dr. Menard's servers, workstations and networks are functioning properly. If something does go awry, highly trained and experienced technicians are there to help.

"Verteks has been helping us with the systems at our Paddock Park practice in Ocala for some time," Dr. Menard said. "Now they provide support at both locations as well as assistance with special projects such as this software upgrade. It's working out well for us to have a local provider we can turn to for help as needed."

Although Dr. Menard has a nose for technology, he fully relies on Verteks for IT know-how and support. When you're running a veterinary practice — or any business — you need computers to work right and help you do your job. If Dr. Menard has to treat his computer systems like he does his patients, he's not getting the best value for his IT investment. That's why he relies on Verteks.

"The Verteks team is always available to help us with any technology issues we may have," he said. "They're never too busy to help or talk down to you or dismiss your issues in any way. It gives you peace of mind to know that highly skilled IT professionals are available to answer your questions. I would definitely recommend Verteks Consulting."

"The Verteks team is not only knowledgeable — they treat me as a valued customer. When they recommend new solutions, they do so with the best interests of my practice in mind. I have a great deal of trust and confidence in their ability to meet the needs of my business."

— Dr. David Menard, DVM

'Google Hacking' on the Rise

Hackers are leveraging the power of search engines such as Google to successfully carry out automated cyber attacks against vulnerable web sites, data security company Imperva notes in its latest Hacker Intelligence Initiative (HII) Report. The attacks have been dubbed "Google Hacking."

Hackers armed with a browser and specially crafted search queries ("Google Dorks") are using botnets to generate more than 80,000 daily queries, identify potential attack targets and build an accurate picture of the resources within servers that are potentially exposed. By automating the query and result parsing, the attacker can carry out a large number of search queries, examine the returned results and get a filtered list of potentially exploitable sites in a very short time and with minimal effort. Because searches are conducted using botnets, and not the hacker's IP address, the attacker's identity remains concealed.

'App Economy' Flourishes

While the U.S. jobs picture may be bleak, the proliferation of Facebook and mobile technology applications has spawned an entirely new industry – dubbed the "App Economy" — that has added at least 182,000 new jobs and contributed more than $12.19 billion in wages and benefits to the U.S. economy this year, according to new research from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business.

Using data provided by Facebook, professors at the Smith School's Center for Digital Innovation, Technology and Strategy say the App Economy has created more than 53,000 new jobs in software companies who make applications for the Facebook platform. Apps include everything from productivity tools to popular games.

"Our findings confirm that social media platforms have created a thriving new industry," said Il-Horn Hann, who co-authored the study with Siva Viswanathan. "As Facebook and other platforms grow, we will continue to see job growth and the ripple effects of these advances in the U.S. economy."

IT Consumerization at 'Tipping Point'

Smart phones, social networks and cloud services are changing the way organizations do business.

The consumerization of IT across enterprise-scale organizations has reached a tipping point where mainstream IT organizations are recognizing that they can no longer ignore the transformational impact of consumer technologies in the enterprise. A new IDC global survey of IT decision makers and consumer IT users finds that consumer use of smartphones, social networks and cloud services are fundamentally changing the way organizations do business.

The study, titled "IT Consumers Transform the Enterprise: Are You Ready?" reveals that IT consumerization creates many new opportunities, including increased employee productivity, improved customer interactions, and faster and more agile business operations and decision-making. At the same time, however, it results in significant IT management and security challenges.

"Today's CIOs have an opportunity to lead both business and IT innovation as they help their organizations decide how to best exploit the trend towards consumerization and personalization of IT," said Crawford Del Prete, IDC's Chief Research Officer. "CIOs are being called upon to do more than just maintain IT operations behind the firewall. In the face of rapid and intense consumerization of IT, CIOs are being called upon to work closely with business decision-makers to create safe, secure, well-managed environments that allow the company to communicate and collaborate with customers and employees anytime, anywhere.

"CIOs need to lead the charge in order to ensure that customers are engaged, confidential data is protected, employee productivity is enabled, and the enterprise is getting the greatest return possible on every IT dollar it spends."

Taking the Lead

The study found that different IT decision-makers are using different tactics to address these rapid-fire changes in their customer and employee expectations. One group of thought leaders, representing 19 percent of the total sample of IT decision makers surveyed, was found to be particularly proactive in getting ahead of the curve of consumer-driven IT. This group generally emphasizes the need for the IT organization to work closely with business decision-makers to aggressively integrate consumer technologies into a wide range of customer-facing programs and internal business initiatives.

This group of "leaders" can be contrasted with more mainstream organizations that described themselves as market followers, or ones that prefer to let business decision-makers lead the charge without assistance from the IT team. The idea is that these decision-makers tend to be further along in exploiting the potential advantages of IT consumerization.

The research indicates the leaders group is more likely to realize greater benefits from their investments than the mainstream "followers." For example, 45 percent of leaders report they are experiencing improved customer satisfaction and loyalty by using social networks and rich media, compared to 31 percent of the mainstream group. Approximately one-third (32 percent) of leaders say they are seeing increased market share due to their use of social networks and rich media, compared to 20 percent of the mainstream group, and 32 percent note they are seeing greater penetration into new geographies, compared to 20 percent of the mainstream group.

The Public Cloud

Similarly, these proactive leaders are experiencing significant benefits from the use of public cloud services. Specifically, among the 616 organizations in the survey that are using public cloud services, 45 percent of leaders are

reporting they are able to reduce IT staff, full-time employees and/or training expenses using public cloud services, versus 35 percent of mainstream organizations.

Thirty-six percent of leaders are seeing improved competitive positioning from their use of public cloud services, compared to 28 percent of the mainstream sample. In addition, 36 percent of leaders see an improved ability to deal with spikes in demand using public cloud services, compared to 26 percent of mainstream organizations. One-third of leaders experience better end-to-end application performance using public cloud services, compared to 24 percent of mainstream organizations.

While these trends were consistent around the world, the survey did show some international variability. Among U.S.-based IT decision-makers currently using public cloud services, 42 percent said they were seeing reductions in IT staff expenses, full-time employees, and/or training costs, compared to 37 percent of the total sample (including the U.S. respondents).

Key Concerns

The experiences of the leaders provide important lessons for mainstream IT and business decision-makers who are just now moving to fully exploit the business opportunities created by the IT consumerization. Specifically, these experienced leaders point to the need to address a number of concerns.

Among organizations currently using public cloud services, data protection and backup frequency and accuracy in public cloud deployments are an issue for 42 percent of leaders, compared with 32 percent of mainstream organizations. Among all organizations surveyed, 31 percent of leaders are concerned about providing a consistent user experience to customers via social networks across all devices or browsers, compared with 26 percent of mainstream organizations. Forty-one percent identify the ability to guarantee an end-to-end user experience via mobile devices as one of their biggest challenges that result from customer use of mobile devices.

"The experience of these proactive leaders shows that IT and business collaboration is critical in order for CIOs to cost-effectively and proactively manage, control and secure their IT environments at a time when mobility, personalization, cloud and social media are rapidly shifting business requirements," said Del Prete.

Consumers To Drive $2 Trillion Tech Market by 2014

Tech research firm Yankee Group predicts that the growing deployment of wireless and wired connectivity globally is fueling a consumer revolution that will drive $2 trillion in technology spending by 2014. Ubiquitous connectivity, truly mobile devices, content in the cloud and a plethora of apps are enabling consumers to live, work and play on the go. In this new environment, consumers are the new power brokers: They decide which technologies and experiences succeed — and which ones don't.

Yankee Group calls this the era of the connected user. Its new report, "The Next Tipping Point: The Connected Experience," defines how the connected-user experience is driving not only technology spending, but also technology innovation.

"Gone are the days when IT departments were the sole drivers of demand for new technology. Today, consumers and workers are driving demand and pushing technology into enterprises — shifting trillions of dollars in business with them in the process," said Gigi Wang, chief research officer at Yankee Group.

Yankee Group focuses its research and analytics on the attitudes, behaviors and usage patterns of mobile users. For the last several years, the firm has been tracking the tipping point of ubiquitous connectivity — what it calls "Anywhere" — when a region's number of broadband lines exceeds its population. Today nine countries have passed that tipping point, and by 2014, 30 countries around the globe will be Anywhere.

Strategic Technologies for 2012

Tablets, apps, cloud among key IT industry trends cited by analysts.

Gartner, Inc. has highlighted top technologies and trends that will be strategic for most organizations in 2012. Gartner defines a strategic technology as one with the potential for significant impact on the enterprise in the next three years. Factors that denote significant impact include a high potential for disruption to IT or the business, the need for a major dollar investment, or the risk of being late to adopt. These technologies impact the organization's long-term plans, programs and initiatives.

Six top strategic technologies for 2012 include:

Media Tablets and Beyond: Users can choose between various form factors when it comes to mobile computing. No single platform, form factor or technology will dominate and companies should expect to manage a diverse environment with two to four intelligent clients through 2015. IT leaders need a managed diversity program to address multiple form factors, as well as employees bringing their own smartphones and tablet devices into the workplace.

Mobile-Centric Applications and Interfaces: The user interface in place for more than 20 years is changing. Windows, icons, menus and pointers will be replaced by mobile-centric interfaces emphasizing touch, gesture, search, voice and video. Applications themselves are likely to shift to more focused and simple apps that can be assembled into more complex solutions.

Contextual and Social User Experience: Context-aware computing uses information about an end-user's or object's environment, activities, connections and preferences to

improve the quality of interaction with that end-user or object. A contextually aware system anticipates the user's needs and proactively serves up the most appropriate and customized content, product or service. Context can be used to link mobile, social, location, payment and commerce. Through 2013, context-aware applications will appear in targeted areas such as location-based services, augmented reality on mobile devices and mobile commerce. On the social front, the interfaces for applications are taking on the characteristics of social networks. Social information is also becoming a key source of contextual information to enhance delivery of search results or the operation of applications.

App Stores and Marketplaces: Application stores provide marketplaces where hundreds of thousands of applications are available to mobile users. Gartner forecasts that by 2014, there will be more than 70 billion mobile application downloads from app stores every year. This will grow from a consumer-only phenomenon to an enterprise focus. With enterprise app stores, the role of IT shifts from that of a centralized planner to a market manager providing governance and brokerage services to users and potentially an ecosystem to support entrepreneurs. Enterprises should use a managed diversity approach to focus on app store efforts and segment apps by risk and value.

Big Data: The size, complexity of formats and speed of data delivery exceeds the capabilities of traditional data management technologies. It requires the use of new or exotic technologies simply to manage the volume alone. Many new technologies are emerging, each with the potential to be disruptive. Analytics has become a major driving application for data warehousing and the use of self-service data marts. One major implication of big data, however, is that in the future users will not be able to put all useful information into a single data warehouse. Logical data warehouses bringing together information from multiple sources as needed will replace the single data warehouse model.

Cloud Computing: Cloud computing is a disruptive force that has the potential for broad, long-term impact in most industries. While the market remains in its early stages in 2011 and 2012, it will see the full range of large enterprise providers fully engaged in delivering a range of offerings to build cloud environments and deliver cloud services. Enterprises are moving from trying to understand the cloud to making decisions on selected workloads to implement on cloud services and where they need to build out private clouds. Hybrid cloud computing, which brings together external public cloud services and internal private cloud services, as well as the capabilities to secure, manage and govern the entire cloud spectrum, will be a major focus for 2012.

When did complexity become the norm?

(The day IP telephony vendors saw how it locked you in.)
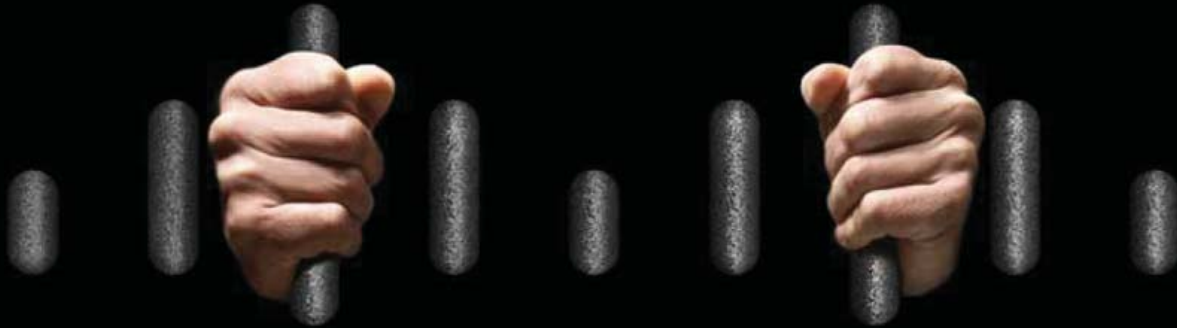
Break out with ShoreTel's brilliantly simple business communications.

If your IP phone system is only IP-enabled or just bolted-together, it can't help but be complex. And complexity breeds expensive training, service, support, and forklift upgrades that some vendors will use to lock you in.

ShoreTel's all-in-one solution is different. Designed from the ground up expressly for IP, it was never complex – and never will be. With simplicity built in, it's easy to set up, painless to manage, and straightforward for everyone in your organization to use.

And that simplicity extends all the way to the bottom line: ShoreTel has the industry's lowest total cost of ownership. Lower than Avaya. Lower than Cisco. Guaranteed. No wonder businesses have rated it the best VoIP provider seven years in a row.*

It's that simple. It's that brilliant. It's ShoreTel.

*Nemertes Research PilotHouse Awards.

VERTEKS
VOICE & DATA
NETWORKS

ShoreTel

1-877-VERTEKS ■ **352-401-0909** ■ **www.verteks.com**