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### Introduction

At Schupp Company, an advertising agency in downtown St. Louis, you will find a pool table in the lobby, a basketball court on the top floor and couches and easy chairs scattered all around.

It's an irreverent take on workplace design, well-suited to the free-wheeling world of advertising, but also indicative of the kind of initiative that makes small companies unique. What they lack in size and resources, small companies like Schupp make up for in flexibility and innovative practices. Schupp is also typical of a new breed of small business entrepreneurs who are using communications to make their companies more competitive.

Today's challenging economic environment—tight capital, fluctuating demand, heavy competition—has small and midsize businesses searching for new ways to streamline, become more productive and implement strategies to protect and expand their customer base.

This white paper looks at several examples of small businesses that are using advanced communications strategies for collaboration, customer service, business expansion and cost control. The companies highlighted here are in different industries and different regions of the world, but they are all alike in seeing communications as critical to their future.



“There are so many facets to the IP Office system. We had no idea what we were missing.”

*Linda Schumacher, IT Director*

## Section 1: Simplifying Collaboration

Every six months or so, Linda Schumacher, IT Director at Schupp Company, sends an e-mail to all of the company’s employees asking “What in the technology realm is hampering your ability to do business or serve your clients properly?”

Over time, she discovered a growing concern over communications. “I began to get answers like ‘We can’t prioritize our calls. We can’t get voice mail and e-mail working together.’” The responses led her to look at all the ways that an outdated communications system were affecting their business.

Typical examples: With no Caller ID, employees relied on the office manager to screen calls. The many informal work areas in Schupp’s office were popular, but employees still had to race back to their offices to take calls. The company regularly conferences with clients, but was spending thousands of dollars a year on third-party conferencing services.

Schumacher, realizing that communications was a drag on both productivity and customer service, spearheaded the effort to get a better solution. As befits an advertising firm, Schupp created a video about its situation—a humorous take on the challenges it was facing—and submitted it in an Avaya-sponsored contest. Schupp won and now has an IP Office solution up and running. Schumacher ticks off the benefits:

- **Better customer service:** account executives can now prioritize their calls.
- **A more productive office:** employees have more tools to manage their own calls making it unnecessary for the office manager to field calls and track down employees.
- **More flexibility:** employees can easily work from anywhere, integrating their mobile phones into the IP Office solution and “hot desking:” easily handling all their calls at a phone in one of the company’s many public areas.
- **Messages never get lost:** voicemails get digitized, attached to e-mails and sent to a smartphone.
- **Better collaboration:** it’s now easy to pull together conference calls and even record them.

AmeriMerchant®

“The value is immeasurable. The capabilities of the IP Office solution turn into more deals and more sales for AmeriMerchant.”

*Linda Huntington, Director of Sales*

## Section 2: Speeding Communication to Drive Sales

Financing—getting the capital to grow and meet market demand—is a major challenge facing today’s small businesses. But this challenge is an opportunity for AmeriMerchant, which is itself a small company that focuses on providing small business financing from its offices in New York and San Francisco.

“Speed of communication is very important to us,” said Andrew Altschuler, AmeriMerchant’s vice president of business development. “If a call comes in we need to distribute it to the proper person very quickly. Otherwise we can easily lose the deal.”

AmeriMerchant’s old communications system “was very, very traditional and very, very slow,” recalled Altschuler. “The receptionist would screen customers and then transfer the call to a sales person who would ask all of the same questions again.”

Now with Avaya IP Office, prospects get routed quickly to a group of sales representatives who instantly know what the caller is interested in. If it’s an existing customer, the Avaya solution automatically triggers the retrieval of the customer’s record from the company’s CRM solution.

“The salesperson can pick up right away and speak to AmeriMerchant’s merits and begin to engage the customer in the process as opposed to starting again from square one,” said Altschuler. If a sales rep has stepped away from his or her desk, IP Office will have their calls ring on their mobile.



### Section 3: Enhancing the Quality of Service

The same customer service capabilities that are helping win financing deals for AmeriMerchant in North America are helping a nurse's association thousands of miles away in Australia.

Responsible for representing the interests of some 50,000 nurses, the New South Wales Nurses Association (NSWNA) has 135 staff members in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

“As a union, we have various complex procedures that differ from other organizations,” said Shane Wootton, the NSWNA's IT Coordinator. “We are the first point of contact for members, so being able to deal with their calls really well is crucial for us.”

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*Shane Wootton, IT Coordinator*

With the goals of increasing employee productivity and enhancing membership services, the NSWNA replaced its aging communications system with Avaya IP Office. The organization now uses reports generated by IP Office to keep tabs on how well calls are being distributed and handled by its staff. Call center agents can see arriving, waiting or lost calls and take advantage of automated voice recording and e-mail integration. NSWNA also installed 250 Avaya 9630G Series IP Deskphone gigabit handsets to provide staff with advanced call management capabilities.

Call times have been reduced. Call quality is up. Call center teams can be better managed to ensure the right balance of calls. And even though it now has a system that delivers far more functionality, the overall time it takes to administer Avaya IP Office is 50 percent less than the previous system.

**Built-in call recording:** Managers at AmeriMerchant also take advantage of IP Office's capability to regularly monitor and record calls. This allows them to make sure best practices are being followed and also jump in if an opportunity is being missed. Andrew Altschuler estimates that one to two sales a week are saved this way.



“Upgrading to Avaya IP Office and still being able to use our existing Nortel phones saved a considerable amount of money just in the initial investment.”

*Howie Gold, IT Director*

## Section 4: Protecting Investments while Streamlining Communications

Communications are so essential to a business, many companies resist changing their systems because they are fearful of the disruption and the potential for hidden costs. But handled correctly, the process can be smooth and very cost-effective, as the experience of a global talent agency demonstrates

With a roster of over 1000 musicians and a track record that goes back to the Beatles era, The Agency Group is one of the top talent agencies around, with office walls adorned with images of its clients’ many platinum and gold albums. You will also notice something else: everyone is always on the phone.

“We are not a typical 9 to 5 company,” said The Agency Group’s IT Director, Howie Gold. “Our agents run 24/7. We’ve got offices on the East Coast and West Coast of the U.S., and in Europe. These people are constantly on the move and in need of their communication.”

The Agency Group installed IP Office and put Avaya one-X® Softphone software on agent laptops; if they travel and have access to WiFi, they can route all their calls over the Internet for no additional cost.

The Agency Group also makes extensive use of the IP Office built-in conference bridge, which makes it unnecessary to pay for third-party services for conference calls. Overall, Howie Gold estimates that upgrading to Avaya IP Office is saving the company as much as \$50,000 dollars a year. The Agency Group also saved by being able to reuse its existing Nortel handsets.

**Keeping your existing wiring:** The ability to get the advanced capabilities of Avaya IP Office, without giving up existing investments, also benefited Schupp Company which opted to install digital phones instead of going all IP. “I looked at Voice over IP. And it turned out that it would have been prohibitively expensive,” said Linda Schumacher. “Our digital phones work great and we didn’t have to spend a lot on infrastructure changes.”



But the biggest benefit for Suite Home is that it only needs one server for its entire chain of hotels.

## Section 5: The Benefits of Networking

Networking capabilities were once a major difference separating communications systems designed for very large companies from those intended for small and midsize organizations. In a big company, the communications systems could be networked together and even linked to other IT-based solutions. Now these same capabilities are available using IP-based solutions. That is attracting many small, innovative companies to Avaya IP Office, including the Suite Home hospitality organization in France.

An operator of hotels that cater to budget-minded travelers, Suite Home chose Avaya IP Office in part because of the ability to link to the Property Management System (PMS) it uses for reservations and billing.

But the biggest benefit for Suite Home is that it only needs one installation of the PMS on one server for its entire chain of hotels. This is a huge savings and is enabling Suite Home to more cost-effectively roll out new hotels in cities across France

**Handling Call Overflow on Two Coasts:** AmeriMerchant uses IP Office to network its offices in New York and San Francisco. Co-workers can reach each other using a 3-digit extension. Even more important, when there is an overflow of sales calls (or calls afterhours) in the New York office, they can be seamlessly handled by the San Francisco call center.

**SIP Trunking:** Networking is also important for The Agency Group. It put Avaya IP Office in its Toronto and London offices (while keeping its Nortel phones) and also kept Nortel switches at its offices in Los Angeles, New York and Malmo, Sweden. Everything is connected via SIP trunks and it all works together.

## Section 6: Adding up the Cost Savings

All of these companies selected Avaya IP Office to meet a business challenge. In most cases, their existing phone system was performing adequately, but not effectively supporting their business strategy.

Along the way, they discovered how IP Office enabled them to save money by:

**Increasing sales without increasing overhead:** Relying on smoother call handling and intelligent call routing to handle sales growth without increasing personnel.

**Automating business processes:** Taking advantage of the communications system to automate routine processes, such as customer record lookups.

**Reducing calling costs:** Routing mobile phone and long-distance calls over broadband links.

**Simplifying business expansion:** Making it easy to set up additional locations through networking and other options.

**Ancillary costs:** Eliminating or reducing outsourced conferencing fees, teleworker costs (second line charges), fax line costs, real estate costs and maintenance costs.

In several cases, companies were able to provide an estimate of hard dollar savings:

- **Schupp Company:** Avaya IP Office has saved the company \$6,000-\$7,000 a year in lower conferencing costs and also by reducing the cost of system administration.
- **AmeriMerchant:** The functionality delivered by the Avaya IP Office system (such as better, faster sales coverage) instantly justified the investment; by eliminating the need for separate fax lines and other services, the Avaya IP Office solution paid for itself within a year.
- **The Agency Group:** By saving money on toll calls, conference calling and interoffice calls, plus the ability to retain their investment in Nortel telephones, The Agency Group estimated annual savings of up to \$50,000.

## Section 7: Time to Look at Your Business?

Choosing a new communications solution for your business can seem like a daunting challenge. But as the experience of these companies shows, the right choice can make a dramatic impact, delivering an array of capabilities that enhance your ability to succeed in the new realities of today's economy.

Comments like these are hard to ignore:

*"With IP Office, people are able to get to us, regardless of where we are. It makes us look like the people we want to be, which is the premier artist representative in North America."* — Howie Gold, IT Director, The Agency Group

*"The functional payback of the Avaya system is very tangible on a day-to-day basis because we can see how much more efficient we are, how much better our communication is. Our sales have gone up in the year that we've had the Avaya system."* — Andrew Altschuler, Vice President of Business Development

*"There's no comparison from what we had before to what IP Office gives us."* — Linda Schumacher, IT Director, Schupp Company

### Learn More

Learn more about what Avaya can do to help you thrive in the new economy through cost savings, productivity increases, improved customer service, management flexibility and a host of other benefits. See [www.avaya.com/small](http://www.avaya.com/small) or call your Avaya Authorized Partner today.



## About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit [www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

## Appendix: Solutions for the Small Business

Avaya IP Office is the right choice for companies with a few dozen or a few hundred employees; one office or a network of locations; a traditional office-based environment or employees working virtually.

Avaya IP Office can scale to 1,000 users; use existing wiring or an all new infrastructure; work in IP or digital mode and support some of the most advanced capabilities possible for mobility, customer service, conferencing, collaboration and more. Avaya IP Office comes with a robust, yet simple-to-use set of tools for administration, call-tracking, monitoring and diagnostics. Users are able to manage their communications through a wide range of software options for computers and mobile devices.

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