



3Com IP phone system proves a winning solution for Aspers gaming venue

COST-EFFECTIVE, RESILIENT SOLUTION:

- Ultra-reliable IP communications platform
- Simple, low-cost administration through remote management
- Scalable voice network to meet future demands
- Flexible, network infrastructure cuts phone costs
- Speedy, phased implementation

Aspers

Aspers Swansea aims to bring a new world of entertainment to the Welsh city. Centred around a 45,000 sq. ft. gaming area, the club offers a Las Vegas-style combination of dining, gaming and cabaret-style entertainment. Part of the celebrated Aspinalls group, the UK's longest-established gaming operator, Aspers is one of a series of urban casinos being introduced across the UK in a joint venture with the Australian Packer Organisation.



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Overview

As a 24-hour-style entertainment complex, with restaurants, bars and cabaret stages centred around a gaming venue, Aspers needed a phone system that would be available 24x7. With most reservations and bookings made by phone any downtime would seriously impact on their business.

Managers and floor walkers also needed secure, wireless access across the gaming floor. While reliability was critical, Aspers also wanted an IP-based solution that would enable them to operate their communications more cost-effectively without running extra cabling. With limited local IT support, a core requirement was that the whole system could be configured and managed remotely from the group's main headquarters in London.

The one solution, recommended by their long-time networking solution provider Between the Lines Communication Ltd, that would meet all their requirements and provide the best value for money was 3Com.

A 3Com VCX Connect Server with a secondary server for redundancy, ensure the reliability and security of the converged phone network. A mixture of SIP-based phones provided the communications links for staff, with 3Com 2750 Managed Access Points providing wireless access on the gaming floor. The 3Com Wireless LAN Controller WX2200 provides centralised management, while 3Com Baseline 2426 switches power the network.

Together they deliver a highly-resilient, cost-effective network that reliably runs communications throughout the vast entertainment complex.

The flexibility of the 3Com solution means that the system can be configured and managed remotely – significantly reducing administration costs. In addition, the scalability of the system helps future-proof the group's investment, as they will be able to use their existing network infrastructure to operate new sites due to open over the next few years.

“The best solution to meet their requirements for an IP telephony platform that was ultra reliable, SIP-compliant, based on open standards and easy to manage remotely was from 3Com. It had everything they needed.”

**Richard Coakes, BTL
Communications**

“With 3Com we know that we have great support and from end-to-end of our networks we have high-quality engineering from a trusted name.”

**Nick Snowdon,
IT Manager, Aspers**

Reliability to bet on

When it came to choosing a voice solution for Aspers new urban casino in Swansea, IT manager Nick Snowdon had very specific requirements. While the full range of voice functions was a given he wanted a system that was fully resilient. "As a 24-hour site any downtime for the phone system would impact on reservations for the restaurant and entertainment venues," says Nick, "No business can afford that."

Covering such a large complex, with just the gaming floor alone accommodating 1500 people, a wireless network was needed to enable managers and floor walkers to be in touch wherever they went.

As a sizable new development, Aspers were looking for a solution that would enable them to run the phone system over the same cables as the data network, and save the expense of dual cabling. Nick, who is based in the group's main club, Aspinalls in Curzon Street, Mayfair, has no dedicated local IT resources. So he also wanted an IP-based solution that would enable him to configure and manage wired and wireless networks remotely and provide a future-proof platform for future expansion.

Between the Lines Communications, one of the group's IT suppliers, had introduced Nick to the benefits of 3Com's reliable, open standards-based technology at Aspinalls. When he asked for their recommendation for a phone solution it was no surprise that the one solution that met his requirements perfectly was from 3Com.

"The best solution to meet their requirements for an IP telephony platform that was ultra reliable, SIP-compliant, based on open standards and easy to manage remotely was from 3Com. It had everything they needed." says Richard Coakes of BTL Communications.

At the heart of the system is the VCX Connect 100 platform. which provides an economical IP telephony and messaging platform for up to 100 users.

With the VCX Connect platform Aspers were able to use power-saving access points to maximise energy efficiency. Network performance is enhanced as access points activate or shut down when users move in or out of the different zones.

The new network was deployed in two phases. – first to the administration area where back office staff needed immediate access to the phone system and later to the gaming floor.

To help users get used to the new features of the system and the phones there was some initial training.

"The implementation went extremely well, particularly when you consider how frantic it was with the opening of an entirely new venue," say Nick Snowdon.

New generation communications

Central to the 3Com solution for Aspers phone system are:

3Com VCX™ Connect 100 IP Communications Platform

The core of the network is controlled by the 3Com VCX Connect 100. It provides a wide range of advanced phone features and multimedia communications, based on the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), for up to 100 users. Using a second redundant server, separately located, provides Aspers with distributed redundancy to ensure essential business continuity – even in the event of hardware failure or network disruption.

3Com Access Points

The wireless network on the gaming floor includes Wireless LAN Managed Access Point 2750s (MAPs), which enables users to connect securely as they roam. Easily configured centrally, the energy efficient MAPs use standards-based integration with the wireless LAN switches and controllers for easy plug-and-play installation.

3Com Wireless LAN Controller WX2200

The 3Com Wireless LAN Controller WX2200, together with the 3Com Wireless Switch Manager software centrally manages and controls the 3Com wireless LAN MAPs. With a few keystrokes Nick Snowdon can change the settings for several MAPs, replacing the need for a site visit to individually set up and configure each device.

3Com Baseline Switch 2426-PWR Plus

With its enterprise features at a price affordable for small and mid-sized organisations, the smart voice-ready 3Com Baseline Switch is the most cost-effective solution for a converged network. With Power over Ethernet providing inline power to attached devices such as access points, Aspers were able to realise significant deployment cost savings by installing a single Ethernet cable.

Winning solution

The ultra-reliability of the new phone system has been evident from the initial rollout in September 2006.

Excellent value for money

While the 3Com solution was a good fit for the exacting demands that Aspers required, it has also proved its worth in cost-effectiveness. Whereas the group had other, more expensive systems in place in their first urban casino in Newcastle, the 3Com solution provided all the features they needed, at a truly affordable price. With an IP-based phone network they were also able to save on the cost of cabling separately for voice and data.

"Not only did the 3Com solution provide all the functionality we needed but the pricing was very attractive and represented excellent value for money," comments IT manager Nick Snowdon.

Exceptional reliability

Reliability was a critical element for Aspers, where many of their reservation systems and business processes are reliant on a fully operational phone system. With a secondary redundant VCX Connect server they have the assurance of a fully resilient system to maximise availability.

"From our experience at Aspinalls we knew that 3Com produced good quality products. In terms of reliability 3Com products are exceptional. When we knew the solution was from 3Com we knew we were in good hands."

Easy, remote management

As IT Manager Nick is based in London he wanted an IP-based system that would make expanding and configuring the network as intuitive as possible. 3Com's web-based management system does just that. With no IT resource on site remote management is a necessity. "Easy, web-based remote management will have a significant effect on reducing IT administration costs, now and in the future as the group expands," says Richard Coakes.

Future-proof, scalable infrastructure

Impressive as the features available through the 3Com solution are, Aspers are also aware that the system can deliver much more for them in the future, with new urban casinos planned for Northampton and Bournemouth in the next couple of years. "We have not exploited the system's full potential yet," says Nick Snowdon. "We wanted an easily scalable solution that would enable us to use the infrastructure in place as we expand – so saving costs while protecting our existing investment."

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**Nick Snowdon,
IT Manager, Aspers**

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