

ActionAid chooses Mitel's cost effective option

Over the last 35 years, ActionAid has helped improve the quality of life for over 13 million of the world's most disadvantaged people. Operating in 42 countries worldwide, and working with 2000 partner organisations, ranging from small community groups to alliances and international networks, ActionAid International is a global charity fighting for a world without poverty. ActionAid also campaigns and lobbies the UK Government, as well as influential institutions such as the World Bank, World Trade Organisation and the European Union, to change policies that can exacerbate poverty.



Overview

Client requirements

- Unification of disparate communications systems and existing products
- Significant reduction in high expenditure across global networks
- Improve collaboration in between offices
- Empower employees working 'out in the field' on local projects

Alternative Networks' Solution

- Mitel 3300 IP Communication Platform (ICP)
- Mitel Teleworker Solution
- Mitel Quick Conference
- Maintenance support
- Mobility and carrier solution

Results

- A unified and integrated telecommunications system
- Significant cost saving and fast return on initial investment
- Improved internal communications, collaboration and team working

The challenge

ActionAid run 44 regional offices – including Nairobi, Bangkok and Rio de Janeiro – with London and Johannesburg at the centre of their operations. This wide geographical spread means that communication and connectivity are vital to ensure the effective running of the organisation.

"It's crucial that our network of fundraisers, field workers and administrative staff are able to operate intelligently and intuitively," said Mark Patterson, ActionAid's Head of IS. "However, we're always incredibly careful with how we spend money and were therefore cautious before jumping into a new system. The solution needed to be highly effective, meet all our demands and incur as little expense as possible."

ActionAid required a way of linking offices with similar technology. An improvement was needed in the way the offices communicated, and in the way field operatives contacted their local branch. All this had to be implemented without causing professional delays or miscommunication and also had to drive down the high call expenditure of the organisation.

The solution

As Mitel products were already acting as a telecommunications gateway, Echo Communications Ltd saw that a migration to a full Mitel deployment would make economic and technological sense.

Following a comprehensive assessment of the technical requirements, aligned against the compliance requirements of a not-for-profit organisation, Echo recommended the Mitel IP communications solution – including the Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platform (ICP), the Mitel Teleworker Solution and the Mitel Quick Conference. The pre-existing Siemens PBXs in London and Chard were replaced with the Mitel 3300 ICP, with 180 users in London and 50 in Chard, Somerset. In Nairobi, 40 users were installed via an IP link to London.

The solution (contd)

The ActionAid office in London also implemented the Mitel Teleworker solutions for 10 global users and a Mitel conference bridging solution which was deployed across the network for further cost reduction. By deploying such solutions, ActionAid was able to connect employees seamlessly and cost-effectively, wherever they were – be it at HQ or away in the field.

Plans are in place for further solutions, with a MPLS link between Nairobi, Johannesburg and London being prepared, as well as the use of satellite phones for remote workers. ActionAid is also looking at migrating the existing telephony systems in the Bangkok and Rio offices to IP.

The results

“In the six months since the deployment, at least £50,000 has already been returned on the investment, a highly significant sum which is now able to be ploughed back into the essential work ActionAid does in helping poverty worldwide. A large amount of the saving has been from major savings on conference calls,” said Mark Patterson.

Aside from the financial saving, the technology has helped reduce the latency of ActionAid’s activities, with the solutions allowing networks with differing technical capabilities operate seamlessly. This was particularly prevalent in Ghana, where the slow connection often meant poor line quality and miscommunication, but now regular calls to Johannesburg and London are quick to connect and audibly better in quality, improving communications between the remote volunteers and head office.

