

Coventry Sports Foundation

...more than just sport



Using a 'Pure IP' Solution from Swyx transformed leisure centre's front desk operation, and vastly improved booking and membership revenue.

Introduction

The Coventry Sports Foundation, is a charitable trust that was started in the mid eighties by ex-world record 5000m runner David Moorcroft. The Foundation was established with a mission to provide a wide range of sporting, recreational, educational, and social activities to under represented, and disadvantaged community groups and individuals within Coventry. The Foundation has three sports centres; The Midland Sports Centre, Centre AT7 and The Alan Higgs Centre, all of which are located in the Coventry area, and together employ around 175 staff.

Challenges

The Foundation offers a diverse range of sports and recreational facilities. Outdoor activities include, kayaking and orienteering whilst traditional indoor pursuits encompass a gymnastics facility and other general fitness activities. The Foundation also has a thriving lifestyle health & fitness programme that is available to its customers via its various membership schemes.

As with many leisure centres the biggest challenge facing staff on a daily basis is ensuring that the telephone bookings are processed efficiently whilst at the same time ensuring that there are no queues in the reception areas. Chief Executive at the Foundation, Paul Breed describes the problem, "Receptions at leisure centres are very busy places, the staff have to manage a constant stream of

visitors, plus answer the phone and take bookings. This can be a major headache at the best of times, but when you have to manage facilities distributed across three centres it can often result in missed bookings, unhappy customers and lost revenue. For example if 20 ladies turn-up for an aerobic class, whilst at the same time several people are calling to book badminton courts or other facilities, then either the phone doesn't get answered and we lose the booking, or the ladies are left waiting at reception. This was a key issue for us. I would regularly walk past our reception areas and hear the phone constantly ringing. However we recognised that the main problem was not with our staff, but with our incumbent telephone system, it was not flexible enough to provide a 'real-time' centralised booking system".

The Foundation also needs to market itself and attract new members to its leisure club. According to Breed the old system let them down here as well. He explains, "The revenue we receive from our membership fees is critical to our overall funding requirements. The old system was very cumbersome and inflexible. If all three of our consultants were busy then any incoming call – a new membership enquiry for example -would be lost."

He continues, "Another issue was cost, our management team and staff were distributed over the three centres and 70% of each centre's outbound calls are to the other centres resulting in unnecessarily high telephone bills. What we needed was a centralised, integrated solution so that all of the centres were part of the same telephone system, so that calls between sites were free and bookings could be processed via a single number."

The Solution

The opening of the Alan Higgs centre provided the Foundation with the opportunity to review and rationalise its telephone system and the communications between its 3 centres. After initially considering an upgraded version of its incumbent system, the Foundation was introduced by its technology partner HBT to an entirely new concept in telephony. The solution from Swyx used VoIP (Voice over the Internet Protocol) technology and was entirely software based. This made it an ideal solution to the Foundation's telephony problems. Paul Breed explains, "When HBT introduced us to Swyx, we were all blown away, we did not know that such technology existed, one by one HBT demonstrated how each of our issues could be not only be solved, but also the new system could revolutionise the way in which we could run the leisure centres."

The results

The key difference between the Swyx solution and others supplying old TDM (circuit switched) or hybrid equipment is that the Swyx solution could run on an organisation's existing data network, without the need for proprietary hardware or cabling systems. This enabled the foundation to create a 'virtual' network between the three sites so that in practice they became a single entity.

Paul Breed comments on the results so far, "We have had the system for over 3 years now and quite simply it has revolutionised our operation. Customers can now still call each centre separately, but the system routes all the calls to a telephone receptionist based at the Alan Higgs centre who answers in the name of the centre called. This not only provides a personal service, but also enables the receptionist to make bookings for all three centres. If she is busy then the calls route to the next available member of staff. The result is that we can answer virtually all the inbound calls without compromising the front desk operation."

According to Breed another advantage the Foundation now enjoys is the 'presence feature', Paul explains, "staff can move around the three centres and as soon as they log-in they are available. The receptionist just transfers the call in the normal way and the system will find them just as simple as that. Staff can also manage their profile, set the times of day they are available and redirect calls to their mobiles or voice mail. In the past any move or change we wanted required an engineer to be called out to site, which was not only time consuming, but very expensive!"

Another unexpected benefit that the system provided was a significant reduction in staff absenteeism, Paul explains, "70-80% of our staff are under 25 and whilst this provides the Foundation with a high degree of energy and dynamism it also brings with it a high number of 'lifestyle' absenteeism

problems. In the past it was easy to report in sick, the staff member just called reception and left a message for their supervisor. Using the Swyx system we have now implemented a 'sick line' whereby calls are now routed directly to each individual's manager. This has led to a dramatic reduction in days lost through 'illness'.

- According to Paul Breed the key benefits the Foundation has enjoyed since deploying the Swyx solution are as follows:
- Increased the number of bookings for all three centres by routing booking calls to a single number. This freed up the reception staff to deal with customers directly
- The new call routing has enabled the company to capture almost every call that comes in resulting in increased facility bookings and a significant increase in leisure centre membership
- Internal and external calls can be routed to the specific manager or member of staff regardless of their location
- Each member of staff has the facility to set-up and manage their own telephony profile, this is simple to do and negates the need to call out an engineer.
- Manager and key members of staff can work remotely and still be available
- The Foundation reduced its overall telephone bill by 70%
- The introduction of a 'call-in sick' system has reduced absenteeism by over 20%
- Call recording is used for training and quality control

Summary

Paul Breed summarises the experience of using Swyx so far, "The key benefit is that telephony traffic is now directed to where it needs to be. This has made a major difference to our front desk operations where bookings are near capacity and the memberships for our life style health and fitness programmes has increased by 50% since the installation. The feedback from our customers is also good as they are finding it much easier to contact us. Finally, the support we receive from HBT is excellent, and because it is all networked, problems are solved almost instantly".