



Bill Penney Toyota depends on Switchvox to streamline service

Auto Dealership Uses Switchvox to Build a Better Call Center



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Chief Financial Officer
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Surveys show that most small businesses buy a new telephone system every 5 to 7 years. Considering the fluidity of technology, a phone system over 10 years old is bordering on extinct, and must likely be kept alive using a slew of technological bandages. No business wants the hassle of continually patching an outdated phone system just to keep calls coming in; and for an auto dealership, like Bill Penney Toyota, they especially can’t afford to be cut off from customer calls. It’s also critical that the phone system used by their auto dealership group facilitate the best possible customer experience – and that’s why they chose Switchvox.

Digium knows how important your business communications are. Ryan Hensley, Chief Financial Officer for Bill Penney Toyota in Huntsville, Alabama says it best.

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Bill Penney Toyota is part of the Bill Penney Automotive Group, the #1 volume car dealership in Alabama. According to Hensley, they will sell between 200 and 225 new cars a month; 150 to 175 used cars; and 20 to 25 Mitsubishis per month.

“There are over 16,000 Toyotas in operation in our area and the retention on those 16,000 is about 65 to 66 percent,” he says. “Right now we service about 66% of the Toyotas in operation in our area with our service department writing in excess of 4,000 repairs a month. Without a stable phone system, our sales and service will die. That’s how important your business telephone system is to our dealership”

Starting a Call Center Using Digium Switchvox

Eighteen months ago, Bill Penney Toyota was facing a huge problem getting customers in and out of their service department. A full 70 percent of their customers seemed to drop their cars off for servicing between 7:00 a.m. and 10:30. By 11:00 a.m., it slowed to a crawl, making it hard on the service department. They needed a better way for customers to schedule appointments to smooth the traffic flow.

Additionally, the dealership had a very small IT department. Although the IT team included a “telephony whiz-kid” who had been Band-aiding their aging Cisco phone system for years, it was an increasingly challenging task and the legacy system prevented making changes needed to improve communications in the service center. “It was only a couple of years ago that when you needed changes or there was a problem with the phones, you walked down the hall to the telephone room and you did everything you needed to do right there. It doesn’t work that way anymore,” says Hensley. “And we knew the way to fix our service problem and to better manage phone communication across the board was to buy a new phone system.”

Fortunately, a more ambitious plan was developing.

Bill Penney contacted Southeast Toyota who provided them with the blueprints for setting up a call center that would not only manage the workflow in the service department, but it would boost sales and offer all types of ongoing customer support. They did not have a budget for a new phone system but they were preferably looking for a local vendor, and they wanted a premises-based solution they could manage themselves, backed up by plenty of affordable support, when needed.

“Our Human Resources Director had just come to us from a CPA firm who had recently installed a Digium Switchvox and they were very happy with it,” says Hensley. “We contacted Scott Couch from Network Services & Support, Inc. (NSS) about a Switchvox.”

NSS, Inc. is a preferred Digium Switchvox partner who specializes in world-class IT solutions for small to medium-sized business (SMBs). Located in Cummings Research Park in Huntsville, Alabama, NSS is a customer-focused Digium reseller and integrator of today’s leading edge networking technologies, focused primarily on VoIP phone systems and data network devices.

“With a growing call center, Switchvox was the best choice for Bill Penney because it is based on Asterisk open source software, which can be widely customized,” says Jan Heering, operations manager at NSS. “Plus, Switchvox has the functionality needed for a call center without the costly add-ons.”

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Bill Penney received four bids from telecom vendors. “Most of them were cloud-based, which I had no problem with,” says Hensley. “But we chose the Digium Switchvox because Digium was the only one who would provide a phone server onsite. None of the others would.”

Digium Switchvox Does the Job

Bill Penney purchased the Digium Switchvox 450 Unified Communications (UC) appliance designed for larger businesses that want the high performance, highly redundancy, full-featured system for up to 500 users. When Bill Penney began the process less than 18 months ago, the dealership started with 80 users. That has grown in less than two years to 110 but they have no worries about having to upgrade to a larger system because Switchvox is expandable as their company grows.

They also purchased a mix of Digium phone sets that included some entry-level IP phones, and mid-level phones with color displays, as well as 25 executive level phones ideal for call centers.

When it comes to customer communications, the second biggest killer for a car dealership is who answers the phone and how you answer it,” Hensley says. “We still believe the human touch is the best touch, so we wanted the receptionist to answer the phones, but we needed a way to better distribute calls when she was on the phone, so people didn’t have to wait on hold.”

With Switchvox, the IVR auto attendant gets calls to the correct person and department without having to put them on hold, streamlining the business process.

“Switchvox is designed to help you make more money, much more so than an off-the-shelf system,” says Heering. “Switchvox integrates well with other software and it can be customized to fit the call center environment.”

“It increases Bill Penney’s ability to address customers directly and reduces stress, but it also gets you where you are going quicker,” says Monique Mills, manager of the Bill Penney call center. “Customers can schedule a service appointment, order parts, or make an appointment to buy a car, all through the call center.”

As a manager, Mills really likes Switchvox’s functionality. “My team uses the caller ID function to call the customer by name and it really builds rapport. Customers will often ask for a specific person, or they will ask, ‘How did you know my name?’”

She says it also provides her with the management and training tools she needs to run a successful call center. “It records every call so I can listen in, piggyback, and monitor any call I want, which helps train our call staff. I can

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go into a training session and pull the 3 best and 3 worst calls from the day before and say, ‘Here’s how to properly handle a call’ and ‘Here is how not to handle a call’. It also runs all kinds of reports.”

“It is also easy to log into the computer interface from any PC, whereas in the old days, you did it all standing in the phone room for hours on end,” says Hensley. “The phone room was the size of a walk-in closet and it was a nightmare just to add a phone to the queue.”

Currently the call center is handling an average of 120 outbound calls per day, not counting inbound calls, and still has plenty of room for expansion.

“Now Monique can say to a customer, ‘I have an opening at 11:15, can you make that or would 2:30 be better?’, says Hensley. “We have had great success communicating with our customers and it has helped bring people in while managing sales and service.”

“We continue to learn as we use it, but it comes back down to Bill Penney implementing the most innovative technology available to communicate with our customers,” says Hensley. “When people ask us on the phone, ‘How did you know my name?’, we can say, ‘Because we use cutting-edge technology in everything we do so we can keep you informed!’”



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