



## Premier natural foods chain gained flexibility with Switchvox

California's Clark's Nutrition & Natural Foods enhances on-floor customer service with Switchvox Mobility



**When the opportunity arose to install an advanced VoIP communications system, Clark's Nutrition & Natural Foods Market chain looked to Digium's Switchvox solution.**

**Excellent customer service is a requirement for any retail or service business; and that means having a flexible phone system** with the ability to communicate with customers and employees anywhere, anytime. Whether working on the main floor in the store, stocking inventory in the back, managing paperwork in the office, or traveling between multiple retail locations, it's important to be available. The leadership team of Clark's Nutrition & Natural Foods Market chain understands the critical nature of customer service and had been waiting for the right time to retire their ComDial analog phone system, and replace it with an advanced voice over Internet (VoIP) business solution. When the opportunity arose to open their fourth store in Southern California's populous Inland Empire, the plan for a new communications solution was finally set in motion.

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**Carl Palmer,**  
IT Director,  
Clark's Nutrition &  
Natural Foods Market

Working with Riverside-based Netgain Networks, a preferred Digium partner and reseller, Clark's built a powerful internal MPLS network with VoIP capability. They then implemented a versatile Digium Switchvox system with Unified Communications (UC) features to act as the central hub at the corporate headquarters in Riverside. The system supports more than 100 users with all four stores located in the Southern California towns of Rancho Mirage, Loma Linda, and Chino.

Led by a tech-savvy CEO, Ray Clark, Clark's Nutrition opened in 1972 as a family-owned business. Concerned that if the old phone system failed it would create a void in communications among customers, store locations, and the corporate office in Riverside. Clark appointed the company IT Director Carl Palmer, to research an affordable, but flexible VoIP solution.

## Switchvox Meets the Requirements

“Our CEO enjoys following technology, and he had built a sophisticated data network for the stores,” says Palmer. “He had been concerned about our telecommunications for some time, and knew we needed to expand our data network to include voice. With the opening of a new store, and overall customer service as a top priority, he knew it was time to change and had a list of features he wanted in the new VoIP system.”

First, they wanted all four locations interconnected to a centralized hub in Riverside so that customers could call one number and seamlessly connect to any of the stores. Currently, Switchvox has all four of their stores connected to the hub in Riverside, and the system supports over 100 users. Customers are directed to any store or department within the chain by an easy-to-program IVR.

Netgain Networks then introduced Clark's to the concept of utilizing mobility as part of their Switchvox solution. Palmer says he knew that was what they wanted although mobility was not initially a priority. Since only a couple of the employees and store consultants move from store to store, they didn't originally think a mobile app was needed. But suddenly, that mobile concept opened up possibilities not previously considered such as more flexibility for the employees and more convenience for the customer.

“Now we have over fifty extensions using the mobile app on iPhones on the sales floor. Each salesperson now has their own extension so if a customer comes in and talks to someone and later has more questions, they can call that extension directly instead of starting over with someone new.”

They needed a dedicated customer service line so they could create a ticket for all customer requests. Call tickets create a digital trail that ensures follow-up to those requests.

“We set up a point-of-sale (POS) and inventory management system that is wired between each store. Using Aruba Networks Solutions, we have a powerful wireless network, which gives us the ability to answer phones, answer questions, and provide customer service support from the sales floor,” Palmer explains. “This is particularly convenient if a customer is looking for an out-of-stock item at one store and they want to check with another store to see if they have it.”

Also important in a phone system solution, Clark's did not want to have to call in outside support for the system. Having a system they could completely manage internally was a priority. “It was not only expensive, but time-consuming to call in a

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something as simple as a menu change or a new extension," says Palmer. "We are still adjusting to having the Switchvox equipment onsite and the maintenance of the system being so easy to manage that we can take care of problems ourselves."

Internally, staff wanted to be able to reach a manager at any store, any time, whether they were on the floor or in their office. "In the retail business, it is hard to know everyone's schedule because they change often, so for convenience, we wanted to be able to reach the manager or assistant manager on duty whenever we called," Palmer says. "With Switchvox, the call queues are key. We have configured them so that we can call any extension at any location and get someone on the phone."

Finally, the CEO wanted protection against any potential cause of a power outage.

## The Digium Switchvox 310 with Survivability and Cold Spare

Clark's Nutrition & Natural Foods Market purchased the Switchvox 310 with a mixture of high-definition Digium IP office phones for their administrative offices, including 40 Digium IP D50s for the store floor.

They worked with NetGain to design and build an internal MPLS network with survivability – that is the ability to maintain uninterrupted service regardless of the scale, magnitude, or duration of a failure. They also purchased a cold spare that would provide immediate back up to cover the transient period following any faulty occurrence, in case of a complete power outage.

## Switchvox Seals the Deal

"Time changed our needs," says Palmer, who chuckles when he talks about the extremes of switching from an old analog system to VoIP. "The ComDial was a plain old analog phone system complete with its DOS-based punch down server. It is probably hard to believe but we were so concerned about the system overheating and crashing that we actually removed the door of the CPU on one of the servers and placed a desk fan in front of it to keep it cool!"

He says they considered both a Shoretel and an Avaya system in addition to Switchvox while analyzing their needs. "There's no question the price points with Digium Switchvox were much better, but when we were able to just tick off all the features Switchvox offered against our list of priorities, we had no doubt Switchvox was the best choice," Palmer says.



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