

# Wards Solicitors

Celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005, **Wards Solicitors** is one of the largest and most established legal practices in the southwest, employing over 150 people at their 11 offices in 9 different locations around the Bristol area.

Wards is a full service practice offering a complete range of legal services with professionals specialising in; business law, commercial & domestic property conveyancing, employment law, probate, domestic & relationship issues and litigation. Wards has built a formidable reputation in the region by offering its clients a very friendly and responsive service that is good value for money and locally accessible.

## Challenges: Outdated technology, low functionality, limited connectivity

Throughout its history Wards has always embraced new technology if they believed it would help in delivering a better service for its clients. However its existing telephony installations had not only become outdated but also incompatible with the other office installations making it obsolete in many cases. Hugh Cooper, ICT manager at Wards explains, *"Like many businesses that grow organically over time, our offices had a complete mixture of systems from many different telephony vendors. Many of the systems were incompatible with each other and therefore could only serve an individual branch."*

Cooper continues, *"This was an unsatisfactory situation, for example if a client called our Clevedon office needing expert advice on a particular topic and the only available resource at that time was at our Bristol office, we would need to ask them to call a separate number. This was not a very professional solution; not only did it make the company look colloquial, but it also gave the potential client the opportunity to call a different practice altogether. We effectively lost control of them at that point. We needed a system that would allow us to connect any external caller to any extension within Wards regardless of location"*

Another problem faced by Wards was answering phones during busy periods. The limitations of the existing telephony systems only allowed office administrators to answer an incoming call, so if they were busy then the call would go unanswered. This resulted in existing clients being frustrated and potential new clients being lost altogether.

## Executive Summary

### Background

Celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005, **Wards Solicitors** is one of the largest and most established legal practices in the southwest, employing over 150 people at their 11 offices in 9 different locations around the Bristol area.

### Challenges:

- Replace old incompatible TDM equipment to provide common telephone interconnectivity between all offices
- Connect clients to relevant legal "experts" seamlessly, regardless of location
- Ensure important calls are not missed during busy periods
- Reduce high maintenance costs

### Solution:

A "pure" IP PBX VoIP system from Swyx

### Results

- **More possibilities** - Improved the availability of legal "expert" resources through central number, therefore calls could be automatically transferred appropriately and potential clients not lost if they have to re-dial different location
- **More contact** - Inter-office connectivity dramatically improved call answering and customer response – with urgent calls being prioritised
- **A more "agile" office** – Using Swyx's built-in electronic fax meant internal and external communications could be sent direct from the desktop, improving office efficiency
- **Lower Costs** - Integration with data system, made installation and administration in new offices very easy to manage and support resulting in self-service and very much reduced maintenance charges.



Hugh Cooper explains "The Swyx system immediately appealed because it was a "pure" IP PBX, designed as an IP Telephony system from scratch, not just a "bolt-on" adaptor. It could integrate into our existing data networks using the same connection point without the need to add additional cabling. This provided us with the connectivity and the functionality we needed."



Cooper concludes, "The Swyx system has done everything it promised and more, connecting all of our offices through a distributed and integrated telephony system. All of our professional resources are available to our clients with just one inbound phone call, making our business far more responsive, efficient and professional".



## **Solution:** A fully integrated IP telephony system

Wards recognised that they needed a single unified telephony system that would meet all their existing business challenges and have the flexibility to meet the potential requirements of the future.

After researching the market and the current trends in voice technology, Wards decided that IP telephony was rapidly replacing the older circuit switched systems and fast becoming the technology of choice for fully integrated voice and data systems. It was the high level of functionality that attracted Hugh Cooper to the Swyx product; the specification appeared to meet all of the company's requirements and was not simply an "IP add-on" of an existing system.

Cooper describes the next steps, "A Swyx distributor introduced us to our local reseller, Cloud Communications, who provided us with a full demonstration of the system. The demonstration was very impressive and the decision was taken to trial the system at two branches; Portishead and Nailsea, before rolling it out to the other 9 offices. The trial was a very important step for us, not only to determine the viability of the system, but also to learn how we could match the new technology with the needs of the business and achieve the best results. After 6 months, the trial was declared a complete success, meeting all of our selection criteria." Wards then started to roll-out the solution to all its other offices.

## **Results** – Added new possibilities, more customer contact, greater agility and lowered costs.

All branches are now operating with an integrated Swyx system. Cooper comments on the results so far, "The roll out of the Swyx system went very well, the only real problems were the delay in the delivery of the ISDN lines. Cloud provided on-site assistance for the first couple of installations, but after that I was happy to do them independently with on-going telephone support as required".

The benefits that Wards has realised from the Swyx installation include:

### **More Possibilities - Experts available to meet client demand**

An existing or potential client can call any of the 11 offices and be put straight through to a solicitor that specialises in the required discipline without having to make another external call. This gives the business the agility to react quickly to new demands and provides the client with the impression of dealing with a large professional company.

### **Improved & personalised contact**

The Swyx system can be answered by anybody in the office if the main receptionist is busy. The person answering the call knows immediately if it is an external call and, through integration with Microsoft Outlook even has the callers name and details on the screen allowing a personal greeting.

### **A more "agile" office**

Using Swyx's built-in fax facility, the company can send and receive communications from the desktop (either between fee-earning professionals or other legal colleagues in different practices), without the need to visit the fax machine or rely on somebody to deliver the fax to the desk of the individual solicitor. This has improved office efficiency and maximised professional time.

### **Major savings on telephony support costs**

Wards is now able to support the complete telephony system in-house without the need to enter into long-term expensive maintenance agreements. Wards get excellent service from its reseller who provides advice and consultancy on new software versions and updates. Hugh Cooper comments, "I do all of the moves and changes myself, if we have a new employee, I set them up the day before they arrive and they are up and working from the start, in fact I don't even need to give them any training on the system, a quick briefing from a colleague is all that's required".