



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Polycom and Abacus make collaboration feel like home at Beacon Communities, LLC

At a glance

- Unifies communication under a single umbrella
- Enables collaboration among 50 locations
- Cloud solution saves roughly \$250,000 annually

Solutions

- Polycom® VVX® 600
- Polycom® VVX® 400
- Polycom® VVX® 200
- Polycom® SoundStation® IP 7000



Beacon Communities' "Living Well by Design" tagline means different things to different people. That's probably because the projects undertaken by this real estate developer reach far and wide. One look through the Beacon Communities portfolio shows a deep dedication to designing exceptional living experiences—whether it be affordable housing, market-rate housing, mixed-income housing, or developments ranging from new construction to historic adaptive reuse, to renovation of existing housing.

"When you provide somebody with a home they can be proud of, it helps them change their life, refocus, and change the way they feel about themselves. That's the reason we do what we do here," says John Reardon, Vice President of Marketing at Beacon Communities, LLC.

With that approach, Beacon transformed Old Colony in South Boston from a crumbling 70-year-old public housing project into today's beautiful The Homes at Old Colony. Similarly, Ames Shovel Works in Easton, Massachusetts, was a 19th-century industrial complex listed as one of the 11 most endangered historic sites in the U.S. After the \$46 million revitalization project with Beacon at the helm, Ames is now luxury apartment buildings that keep vital historical aspects intact and where "history becomes home."



“The Polycom/Abacus solution changed the game at the property level and at the management level.”

Richard Goff, Vice President of Technology, Beacon Communities

Keeping up with growth

With more than 60 communities, nearly 12,000 apartments in New England, New York, Maryland, and Virginia, community-building is ingrained in the Beacon Communities employee culture. “The core of Beacon is our people, so we try our best to maintain great employee engagement as our company grows and employees spread out to other states,” Reardon says.

Within the last few years, the company grew beyond that corporate office that sits at the heart of downtown Boston. The single corporate office conference bridge had a 6-12 phone line capacity, and the other Beacon offices throughout seven states were operating independently with a patchwork of solutions and vendors providing PBX services.

Richard Goff, Vice President of Technology, saw the need to gather all physical locations under one umbrella, and refused to settle for less than top-tier communications technology to tie all the office locations together.

The game changer

To head the change, he selected Abacus Group. “Most vendors come in on talking-and-selling mode. What stood out about Abacus Group is that they spent a good amount of time just listening to what we do. They wanted to know our goals and objectives and then looked within their toolkit to marry everything back up,” Goff says.

That toolkit consisted of Abacus Cloud hosted VoIP and Polycom phones. Fifty Beacon Communities field offices, composed of 362 distributed employees, converted to the Abacus platform of internet-based telephony service that allows for unified communications and SIP-based PBX.

Richard Goff and team can now manage all locations from any location with an internet connection. “The Polycom/Abacus solution changed the game at the property level and at the management level,” Goff says, referring to the ease of setup, ease of use, and ease of management that the portal application provides.

Nearly 400 Polycom phones, including the VVX® 200, VVX® 400, and VVX® 600, populate the corporate office and 50 field offices, where employees process over a million calls per year.

Costs down, productivity up

Long-distance cost savings in the thousands

Implementing a single-sourced networked solution allowed Beacon to eliminate long-distance calls amongst themselves. “The expense of long distance connectivity between all operations of the business went away overnight,” Goff says. Collectively, the savings approximate \$250,000 annually.

Workflow improvements boost productivity

Previously, all calls were routed from an operator at the main phone number. When Beacon began using three-digit dialing as part of the networked solution, every employee immediately picked up their own phone number. With calls coming directly to employees, receptionist personnel no longer have to traffic control inbound calls. Vendors who need to reach maintenance staff can now bypass front desk personnel and more quickly get their issues resolved. Freeing up front desk staff and allowing callers direct connections improves productivity and response communications.

When those calls come directly to employee desks, “The sound quality of the Polycom phones is extraordinary,” Goff says. “We have a lot of happy employees knowing that their desk phones are of a better quality than what we had before.”

And when not at their desks, they don’t miss a beat. Mobile maintenance staff on various properties no longer miss messages from key vendors, and executive staff with hectic travel schedules find voicemail to email to be one of the favorite features.

Conference bridging expands collaboration

In the largest conference room at Beacon’s corporate office, two SoundStation IP 7000s are daisy-chained, with two added expansion microphones to increase coverage of the room and amplify voice pickup. “The HD Audio makes for an exceptional conferencing experience,” Goff says. However, employees are no longer limited to these physical meeting spaces.

Any manager in the company who wishes to host conference calls can do so from anywhere with a VoIP or cell signal. Unlike the previous architecture in which conference capability was enabled only within the corporate office, the current setup allows for virtually unlimited flexibility. “That enhancement

alone took the chains off everybody in terms of being able to expand their ability to collaborate, and initiate calls internal to the company and external with partners,” Goff explains.

Partners behind the products

Community building and relationship building go hand in hand—with employees, vendors, tenants, and partners alike. Richard Goff, in working with Abacus Group, explains that there is a deep mutual respect and desire for each party to succeed. “Abacus Group has terrific people who are very supportive of our organization. I don’t consider them just a vendor; they are a partner,” Goff comments.

Mary Mulloy, president of Abacus Group, echoes that sentiment. “When Beacon calls, we jump. It’s in our DNA. We are honored that Beacon has trusted their communications with us. We are with Rich Goff every step of the way. ”

Goff reflects on how much has changed in the past few years. “I can’t imagine going back to what telephony was like five or six years ago, before we had the Polycom/ Abacus solution. Do we want to take a giant leap backwards and try that again? No.”

Partner

Abacus Group

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About Polycom

Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with video, voice and content solutions from Polycom. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience and unmatched investment protection.

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