



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Granite School District Deploys Polycom® CX Phones to Bring Microsoft® Unified Communications Environment to Teachers and Staff

Industry

- Education

Daily use

- Unified communications
- Classroom safety

Solution

- Polycom® CX300 desktop phones and Polycom® CX5000 unified conference stations integrate with Granite Schools' Microsoft® OCS 2007 R2
- Plug-and-play Polycom CX family phones make it simple to conduct calls, Live Meeting sessions and videoconferences, see when new voice mails arrive, and more
- Microsoft, Avaya and Qwest collaborated with Polycom on deployment

Results and benefits

- Cost-effective Polycom CX family of voice and video solutions met district's needs—and its budget
- Teachers can use phones as mics or speakers for OCS-enabled collaboration, and to make or receive calls directly from classroom
- Staff can report emergencies immediately
- Familiarity of real telephone reduces user confusion and improves adoption
- IP telephony system allows Granite Schools to equip classrooms with new phones just by plugging them into USB ports of PCs

Overview

Stretched across 257 square miles of central Salt Lake County in Utah, Granite School District serves more than 68,000 students. It is the state's largest district and one of the largest in the nation. And despite its size, Granite Schools has been recognized nationally for its teacher development programs and the economic efficiency of its administration.

In 2010, Granite Schools worked with Qwest Communications, Polycom, Microsoft, and Avaya to deploy a cost-effective unified communications infrastructure built around Microsoft® Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007 R2.

With their new Polycom® CX phones, teachers and staff in 88 schools and support facilities now can access the advanced, presence-enabled features of Microsoft OCS that improve productivity, communication, and collaboration. The Polycom CX phones act as fully integrated UC devices and interface directly with district PCs, making it easier to equip every classroom with a telephone, most for the very first time. And with their familiar telephone interface, the Polycom phones help ensure that anyone can make or receive a call within the classroom, check voicemail, speak up during a Microsoft® Office Live Meeting session, or quickly report an emergency.

Equipping Every Classroom while Extending a UC Environment

The tagline of Granite Schools—From here, anything's possible—isn't just happy talk. Year after year, the district's students outperform state and national averages for SAT scores, even as the district spends 35 percent less per student than U.S. schools overall.

Now the Granite School district is applying that same successful philosophy to its unified communications (UC) environment. Most of the district's 8,000 full- and part-time employees have used Microsoft UC software on their PCs to collaborate over video with colleagues, share learning content, and check messages. Its PBX-based telephone system, however, remained apart from the UC workflow. Few classrooms were equipped with phone lines, making it difficult for teachers to efficiently make, receive or return calls. And reporting an emergency often required a sprint down the hallway.

“We want to cut in half the number of times teachers have to leave school for training. Integrating Polycom CX phones in our UC environment helps us get there.”

Dale Roberts, Director of Information Systems, Granite School District, Salt Lake City, Utah

According to Dale Roberts, director of information systems at Granite Schools, that lack of UC integration came at a cost to staffers' productivity. “It was important for teachers to be able to make a call directly from their classroom, rather than running to the office or standing in line in the break room,” Roberts says.

Finding a solution with Polycom CX phones

A Microsoft program to help fund deployments of IP phones designed to operate with Microsoft OCS software offered a chance to equip every classroom with Polycom® CX300 phones. Polycom CX300 is an enterprise-grade IP telephone offering driverless, plug-and-play USB integration with Microsoft OCS. “Polycom CX300 was the perfect choice,” recalls Brenda Welsh, senior sales engineer for Qwest, a Polycom voice partner that won the contract to supply the phones. “It’s a great phone at a great value; for it to be so cost-effective is kind of amazing.”

Granite Schools deployed a total of 3,100 Polycom CX300 phones, along with a trio of Polycom CX5000 unified conference stations capable of capturing a 360-degree view of participants for video-enabled Live Meeting sessions.

Avaya integrated the district’s UC infrastructure with its new IP telephone environment, as Qwest worked with Polycom to secure enough phones to enable a full deployment by December 2010. Welsh was also impressed with Polycom’s ability to deliver so many phones less than four weeks from the day they were ordered. “We sell products from many different manufacturers,” she says. “Delivering so many phones so quickly is pretty much unheard of.”

Roberts says the Polycom CX phones offer an advantage over USB headsets. Teachers, he says, want the familiarity of a handset and physical keypad, even if they can use them to check visual voicemail, engage in videoconferences and Live Meeting sessions, and share desktop content. “When plugged into the PC, the phones are fully enabled to serve as speakers and microphones,” Roberts says. “So teachers or students can use them to take advantage of UC features, or to simply make a phone call. A headset just isn’t as user-friendly.”

The phones are so well integrated with OCS software that when a teacher is speaking on the phone, others can see that the line is busy. Other features, including voice message indicator lights, are also convenient. “If I miss a call, the phone tells me,” says Roberts. “If my secretary answers a call, it tells me.”

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Brenda Welsh, Senior Sales Engineer, Qwest Communications

Saving time and empowering teachers

The goal, says Roberts, is to streamline communication and collaboration, from interactively sharing instructional modules to participating in teacher training programs. “We want to cut in half the number of times teachers have to leave school for training,” he says. “Integrating Polycom CX phones in our UC environment helps us get there. Now it’s easier for multiple locations to join a single conference. That represents a lot of time savings.”

On top of the operational benefits, Roberts says staffers just appreciate having their own phone, with their own number, where people can reach them. “They love these Polycom phones,” he says. “For the first time, they each have a number that can be dialed from the outside. It makes them feel like real people.”

Qwest Communications

www.qwest.com



Real-time communication and collaboration

- 3,100 Polycom® CX300 desktop phones optimized for Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 R2
- Three Polycom CX5000 unified conference stations optimized for Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, specialists, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security for video collaboration, whether on-premises, hosted, or cloud-delivered. Visit www.polycom.com or connect with Polycom on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

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