



NGT Treats Former (3)Tone VoIP Resellers & End-Users to Quick Switch

Seamless migration of 5,500 end-users to NGT's 6DegreesIP platform

Background

The year 2005 started off with a shock to the business Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) world. In late January, Level 3 Communications announced it was discontinuing its (3)Tone hosted IP PBX business service. Dozens of Level 3 resellers were confronted with a tight deadline for transitioning all their business customers and thousands of (3)Tone business VoIP end-users to a new platform and a new wholesale provider. As a growing leader in the wholesale VoIP market, New Global Telecom (NGT) moved quickly to contract with former (3)Tone resellers and start transitioning end-users.

By leveraging its close relationship with Level 3 – from whom New Global Telecom buys origination and termination services – and coordinating with newly signed (3)Tone service provider-resellers, NGT began a migration project that would successfully and seamlessly transition more than 60 percent of Level 3's entire (3)Tone customer base before the June 15, 2005 deadline.

Situation

New Global Telecom knew it faced a tough assignment – to migrate 5,500 end-users from 245 different businesses to its 6DegreesIP hosted IP PBX service in five and a half months—all with minimal downtime, while remaining transparent from an end-user perspective. In addition, the migration required that NGT change end-user devices from MGCP to SIP.

“While we were pleased to get the lion's share of Level 3's (3)Tone customers,” said Mike Coar, NGT Director of Client Services, “we knew it would be an involved process with tight deadlines, requiring end-to-end coordination and cooperation to effect a seamless, on-time migration.”

NGT's new service provider-resellers included TMC Communications, a California-based provider of long-distance,

NGT Migration Stats

- **5,500 end-users** from **245 different companies** migrated
- Live migration period was **10 weeks**
- An average of **35 company sites** and **550 end users per week** were migrated
- End-to-end migrations averaged **30 minutes per site**, with sites averaging 20 users
- **Five-minute average downtime** per site

local, conferencing, data and Internet access services (www.tmccom.com); Access Point, Inc., a North Carolina-based provider of integrated business communications services (www.accesspointinc.com); and CentricVoice, a Texas-based voice-enabled ISP (www.centricvoice.com).

Jeff Rothell, President and CEO of CentricVoice stated, “We understand what it takes to be successful delivering VoIP services to small- and medium-size enterprises. So we placed our confidence in New Global Telecom to successfully migrate our customers and support our business.”

Solution

To ensure a successful migration, NGT conducted testing and established a sound migration process. Various testing activities and trials were conducted over a six-week period in February and March, including customer premises equipment (CPE) testing in the NGT Product Lab to ensure that accounts could be moved from the (3)Tone service platform to the 6DegreesIP platform without incident. Since the application server platform used by NGT is based on BroadSoft®, and the (3)Tone platform was from a different vendor, this added complexity – including the need for a feature-by-feature comparison of functionality. The experience of NGT’s operations team ultimately proved to be of tremendous value in managing the complexities of this platform change-out.

“We tested, developed and perfected our processes,” said Caitlin Clark-Zigmond, NGT Director of Product Management. “We provided a detailed 12-page migration plan for the service providers and then performed their internal migrations before moving to end-user migrations.”

Clark-Zigmond said that migrating service providers’ internal users first allowed NGT to identify and address potential problems and also ensured that the service provider was comfortable with the process before end-user customer migrations began.

In addition to all the documentation and testing, NGT also hosted a group training session for service providers at the end of March. The session lasted four days and trained 24 staff members from seven service providers regarding the changes, the implementation, and nuances between the feature platforms.

“This advanced preparation gave service providers a comfort level with the process before a single end-user was migrated,” stated Clark-Zigmond. “The advanced testing, documentation and detailed project planning enabled end-user migrations to be done very quickly, with minimal downtime.”

“We had to be more than just adequately prepared, and having everyone in one place at one time before the actual migration proved more effective than individual on-site training,” said Coar. “Service providers’ staff members benefited from hearing about challenges that other service providers were facing and by working through solutions to those challenges in advance.”

The training and preparation paid off, with end-to-end migrations averaging 30 minutes per site (the average site had 20 seats). The mean downtime per site was about two to three minutes with NGT being completely hidden to end-users, who were unaware of the multiple vendors involved in the VoIP platform migration.

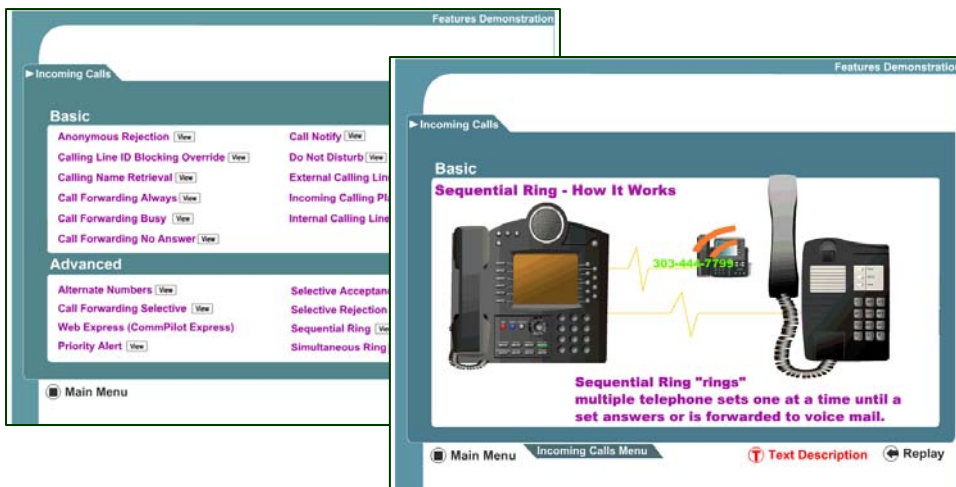
NGT remained flexible early in the conversion process. For example, Level 3's daily service activation time (when Level 3 sets its routing tables to determine how calls are handled) routinely took place just as most East Coast end-users were arriving at work. That prompted NGT to work with Level 3 engineers to construct a two-phased implementation. The work-around allowed for a temporary routing change to occur after East Coast business hours, with the final routing change taking place in the morning.

"We looked at the two-phased approach as training wheels for our service providers," said NGT Director of Network Operations Glenn Pearston. "Once they were comfortable with the process and 'got their balance,' they found it easier to conduct the migrations in one fell swoop, with the first phase becoming more of a hindrance that was no longer needed."

Hardware compatibility also presented some initial hurdles. There are many different products on the market, so that each and every potential configuration could not be completely recreated during testing. This resulted in some additional compatibility testing during the migration process.

"The good news is, we actually discovered just how compatible our 6DegreesIP service on the BroadSoft platform is with the majority of hardware out there," said Clark-Zigmond. "In the legacy PBX and key system world, interoperability between vendors was unheard of – but now we've proven that the underlying IP platform can be changed without impacting the desktop devices."

*** Examples of NGT-developed end-user animations.**



In addition to the service provider training and documentation, NGT also conducted extensive feature-mapping exercises to determine the subtle differences between underlying platforms. In order to make the transition easier for the service providers and their end-users, NGT developed animated demos and self-guided “how-to” animations that highlight the changes from an end-user point of view.

Through preparation, continuous process improvement and documentation, NGT was able to migrate nearly 20 companies per week by mid-May. During the 10-week transition period, NGT successfully migrated an average of 35 sites and 550 end-users per week with an end-to-end migration time of less than 30 minutes per site. Average downtime was less than 5 minutes per site.

The Benefits

New Global Telecom’s testing, training, communications and operational experience in hosted IP PBX services led to a smooth, seamless transition for service providers and their end-users migrating to NGT’s 6DegreesIP wholesale hosted VoIP service.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers achieved a seamless, cross-platform transition in a critical situation on a tight deadline. With access to NGT’s experience, extensive training, Web portal and compatibility testing, service providers were able to switch to the 6DegreesIP product suite with minimal downtime. NGT’s robust product suite includes hosted IP PBX and Class 5 features, end-customer support, network and facilities management and back office functionality.

END-USERS

End-users also benefited from minimal downtime, so they could continue their business operations with little or no interruption. The smooth transition also kept NGT behind the scenes, so that end-users were able to rely on their current service providers for a seamless software change. The detailed feature-mapping identified differences between the platforms, and end-users even gained some new features/functionality following the migration. This included an integrated telephony toolbar for click-to-dial functionality from within Microsoft® Outlook® and Internet Explorer®.

NEW GLOBAL TELECOM

For New Global Telecom, the rapid and successful completion of the migration provided our customers with a thorough introduction to NGT’s operational processes and platform. As a result, customers had the confidence to immediately resume selling VoIP services. In addition, NGT has expanded its base of knowledge in relation to hardware and software compatibility and migration issues. The company is leading the industry today with a proven, reliable platform and product suite that is delivered to service providers as a managed, comprehensive solution for effective provision of VoIP services to residential and business markets.