

AGILITY AGAINST THE ODDS

Cerium and San Juan County Implement Skype for Business in the Nick of Time



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SOLUTION OVERVIEW

San Juan County contacted Cerium when they learned their existing phone system would soon reach its end-of-life. The project took an unexpected turn when that phone system suddenly stopped working. With over 200 employees (including 911 operators) unable to use their phones, Cerium and the County implemented Skype for Business five weeks ahead of schedule.

PROJECT TEAM

- Tony Harrell, IT Director, San Juan County
- David Budke, Account Executive
- Jessica Moran, Project Manager
- Kevin Bingham, Systems Engineer
- Brian Smotherman, Systems Engineer
- Andrew Mosyagin, CSC Support Engineer
- Ian York, Information Technology
- Heather Ross, Manager, Cerium Learning Center
- Barbara Cohen, Trainer

About San Juan County

Named for the San Juan Islands in the Salish Sea in northwest Washington State, San Juan County encompasses 172 named islands and reefs. San Juan County has no state highways; however most of the County's 15,769 inhabitants live on the largest four islands, (Orcas, San Juan, Lopez, and Shaw Islands) which are served by the Washington State Ferry System. With no bridges connecting the Islands to each other or to the mainland, traveling to and from San Juan County requires a boat or a plane.

The County's mission is to provide public services necessary for the health, safety, and general well-being of the citizens of San Juan County; strive to preserve the heritage of the islands, both environmentally and culturally; and serve taxpayers by managing public programs effectively.

Business Need

When it was announced in July of 2016 that the County's current phone system was nearing end of life and would no longer be supported, The County prepared to replace it. Fortunately, Tony Harrell, the County's IT Director, had faced a similar situation and decision-making process at a prior organization. Knowing precisely what system he wanted to replace it with, as well as the company he trusted to design, implement and deploy the new system, he reached out to Cerium Networks.

Project Goals

At the core of every implementation is Cerium's CIO engagement methodology—A holistic approach that helps customers envision the solution, assess the readiness of their organization and help us understand how to best meet their technology goals. We took this same approach with San Juan County.

Through this engagement we defined the projects goals:

- Expand the County's Skype for Business Server 2015 environment in Skype Meetings and Skype Voice based on Skype for Business Server 2015 Standard Edition
- Leverage the County's Exchange Server 2013 to enable Unified Messaging (UM)
- Add Skype for Business servers at two locations,
- Improve communications for the 225–250 users across nine buildings on Orcas, Friday Harbor, and Lopez Islands.

The Project Begins

The engagement started with a voice and video assessment of the County's existing WAN and its ability to carry IP-based voice and video traffic with Quality of Service (QoS) from site to site. This was an imperative step for a successful convergence deployment.

The next steps included a series of planning sessions that addressed the various prerequisites and configurations to ensure a successful deployment. The final session centered on the transition to Skype for Business for Enterprise Voice across all offices and remote workers. Once the configuration of all key server roles and appliances was completed, Cerium's focus shifted to the production pilot.

The Challenge—Murphy's Law

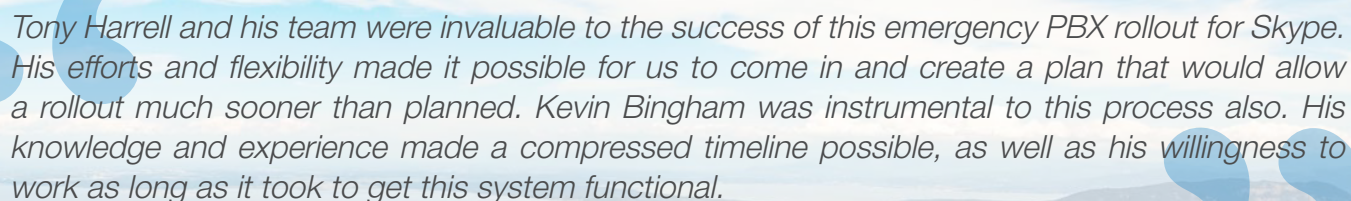
This would have been a standard Skype for Business implementation, but the project took on a new sense of urgency when Murphy's Law struck. The County's existing Barracuda "CudaTel" phone system stopped working. Given that the existing equipment was no longer supported, county staff found themselves having to reboot the system every 2–6 hours. Having 225–250 employees without functioning phones created many issues for the County, but the most critical was that 911 operators were not able to place calls or transfer calls to other PSAPs or deputies.

Revised Implementation—All Hands on Deck

Cerium's project manager immediately created a plan to accelerate the implementation schedule. Simultaneously, Cerium's system engineer began building out the environment remotely. Arrangements were made to get equipment and engineering staff on site immediately—not an easy task when you consider the delivery challenges in the San Juan Islands.

In addition, none of the new circuits had been received due to the schedule change, so the team created a workaround by using existing circuits. At the same time, one of Cerium's technical staff traveled to San Juan County to get the new phones in place. All hands were on deck.

While the technical team worked to get the system functional, the Cerium team established a war room located at the County's facility to serve as a central help desk. This help desk was made up of members from the County, engineers from the Cerium's Support Center, IT staff, the project manager as well as members from Cerium's training department. San Juan County's staff was provided with a dedicated phone number so that calls were routed for immediate assistance.



Tony Harrell and his team were invaluable to the success of this emergency PBX rollout for Skype. His efforts and flexibility made it possible for us to come in and create a plan that would allow a rollout much sooner than planned. Kevin Bingham was instrumental to this process also. His knowledge and experience made a compressed timeline possible, as well as his willingness to work as long as it took to get this system functional.

— Jessica Moran, Project Manager, Cerium Networks

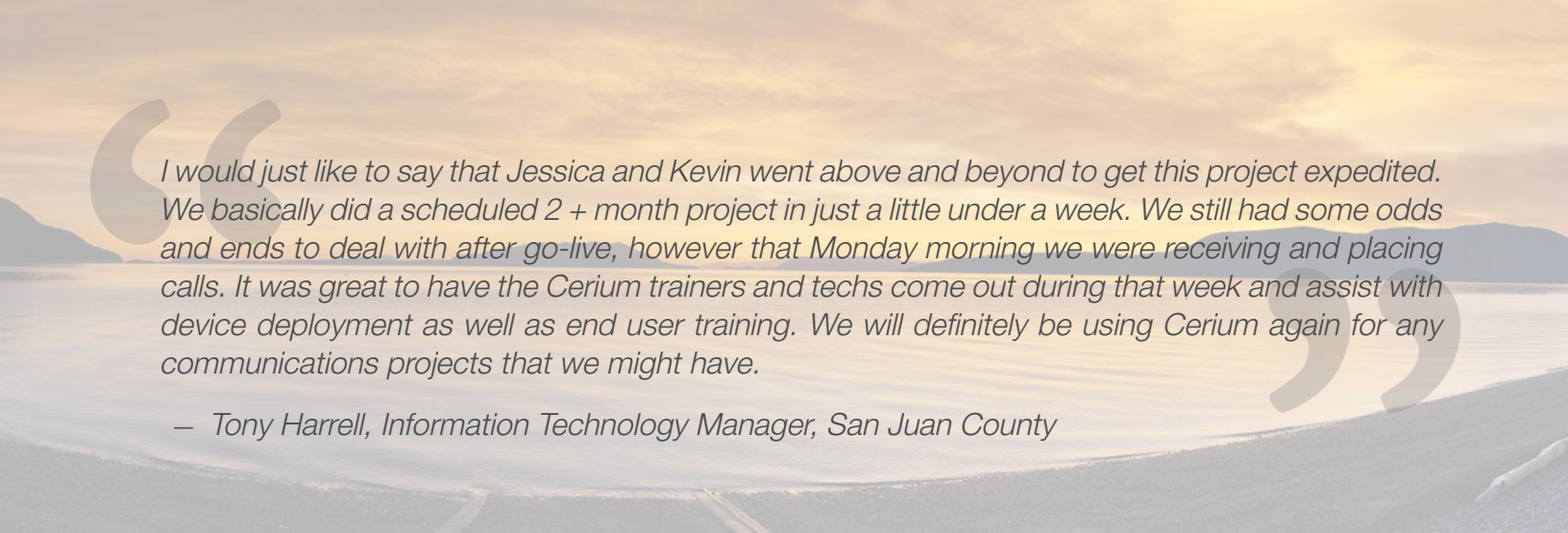
Training—Plan B

None of the pre-determined training could take place with the new condensed schedule, so Cerium and the County went to work on plan B. Cerium's training staff arrived on site the day before the cut over and conducted brown bag sessions every hour on the hour. Cerium also provided staff with user guides and phone instructions. Training was then conducted at additional island locations, with walk-in and 1-on-1 sessions. Follow up training was then provided two days after the cut over, and in the following weeks.

Outcome

Cerium deployed the Skype for Business platform to 255 County workers five weeks ahead of schedule and was accomplished by the efforts of San Juan County staff and Cerium's dedicated project team. San Juan County 911 operators, the IT department and County staff have a reliable communication and collaboration system they can count on in their efforts to support the San Juan community.

After the implementation, Cerium completed turn up and testing of the two new circuits, and implemented e911. In addition, the County is now supported by Cerium's Managed Services Team.



I would just like to say that Jessica and Kevin went above and beyond to get this project expedited. We basically did a scheduled 2 + month project in just a little under a week. We still had some odds and ends to deal with after go-live, however that Monday morning we were receiving and placing calls. It was great to have the Cerium trainers and techs come out during that week and assist with device deployment as well as end user training. We will definitely be using Cerium again for any communications projects that we might have.

— Tony Harrell, Information Technology Manager, San Juan County

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