

Case study

Leicester Theatre Trust implements new software-based communications solution from Nec Philips

£61 million cultural project will use latest technology to provide optimum flexibility

Leicester Theatre Trust (LTT) has turned to NEC Philips Unified Solutions to implement a revolutionary communications solution to match the innovative nature of Leicester's new Curve theatre – a £61million state-of-the-art cultural project which was opened by Her Majesty The Queen on 4 December. Based around a service-orientated Unified Communications architecture - NEC Spherical - the solution integrates the communications technologies with business applications providing a flexible and open infrastructure to support its current and future development plans.



Designed by renowned architect Rafael Vinoly, Curve is a huge curved glass building which features two auditoria, one with up to 803 fixed seats while a 400 flexible seated auditorium provides a versatile smaller space. When the 32 tonne steel walls separating the stage and the foyer are lifted, the stage is visible from street level. The stunning glass façade encloses a magnificent open plan foyer with views onto the café, bars, backstage area, and across the stage.

Rob Greig, ICT and Operations Director at the Leicester Theatre Trust explains, "Curve is a unique space, covering 139,000 square feet and combining the best of today's technologies both front of house and behind the scenes to provide the ultimate arts experience. The space utilises technology on every level, from the opening of the front doors through to the scanning of

NEC

the tickets by barcode readers at the entrance, to the stage flying control system. As such it was vital that any communications solution we decided to implement was innovative enough to meet the unusual demands of the building, and to provide a high level of flexibility and mobility for staff and theatre users."

The solution NEC Philips delivered utilises the NEC Spherical software-based IP communications platform to underpin the mix of SIP wireless, fixed and pc-based communication devices. It also includes a unified contact centre solution for the ticket office, with integration to the theatre's CRM and point of sale applications. The solution has built-in redundancy to ensure the constant availability of the communications technologies, and hospitality features to enable the theatre to offer communications services to corporate and other theatre users.

Greig continues, "With such a unique space we envisaged several issues in designing a communications solution to match our needs. However, the NEC Spherical platform delivered against all our expectations and with its open architecture offers us endless opportunities to continue to develop our technology as the theatre evolves – ultimately it puts us in control of our own destiny."

The NEC Spherical is based on the award-winning Sphere Communications Services Engine (CSE) software and is used by a range of organisations around the globe. It runs on industry-standard servers without the need for expensive proprietary hardware, and will enable the LTT to connect up to 30,000 ports across standards-based Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) and analogue phones, gateways and other communications endpoints. By combining XML and SOAP technology the solution offers the LTT the capability to access a wide range of rich communications web services which can be embedded into critical business processes.

Focusing on the wireless element, Greig continues, "Every aspect of our business relies on efficient

communications, from interactions with customers to behind the scenes activities – particularly in the run-up to and during performances. The wireless element of the solution enables us to improve our front of house interactions with customers and ensure two-way communications between staff no matter where they are in the theatre. If you imagine the coordination required during a performance, you will understand the challenges facing staff and performers in ensuring everything happens on time and with minimum fuss. Unlike the traditional radio technology, the SIP based wireless provided is fully integrated with the rest of the communications solutions and provides excellent coverage, facilitating the communication process."

Through the Contact Centre application, the theatre has streamlined its internet and telephone ticket office activities and systems to provide a more efficient process, providing a better service for customers and potentially reducing operational costs. Greig explains, "By integrating our ticketing system and CRM systems with the new communications solution, we believe we will be able to develop a more personal customer experience, which is essential in a service-focused business like ours. In turn we believe that this will boost repeat purchases and drive value throughout the organisation. For example, once the integration is complete an individual calling in can be identified as a new or returning customer prior to their call being answered, which will enable us to direct their call to the most appropriate operative more efficiently. And in a service-focused industry this is an opportunity that cannot be ignored."



Greig concludes, "Our decision to select the NEC Philips solution was not solely down to the technology proposed, but we felt comfortable that the company had the credentials and capabilities to deliver this demanding and complex project. I am pleased to say that our decision was the right one. We have enjoyed a good working relationship with NEC Philips and see them as an ideal partner for our future development plans."

About NEC Philips Unified Solutions

NEC Philips Unified Solutions (NEC Philips) is a provider of secure enterprise IT and communications solutions, specialising in the deployment of unified communication solutions which combine the best in voice, data, mobile, video and IT communications. NEC Philips engages directly with medium and large enterprises, in both the public and private sectors, providing them with customised productivity solutions integrated tightly into business processes.

NEC Philips designs solutions that combine a range of leading technologies from both the NEC stable and other credible and recognized industry vendors. These solutions consist of infrastructure and application components, wrapped with value added services to deliver a range of IT and communication solutions aimed at transforming enterprise collaboration.

Designed to reduce costs and environmental effects, the infrastructure components combine best-of-breed market technologies in a secure and reliable environment to underpin enterprise IT and communications activities. Infrastructure components incorporate software, IT, voice and data elements, including virtualization, security, identity management, converged networks, storage and wireless solutions.

The application components offer a range of business and end-user solutions focused on improving productivity and efficiency through enhanced collaboration. They incorporate routing applications, mobility, conferencing, presence management, messaging and other user-centric solutions using Microsoft and other technologies.

Maximising potential is the focus of the NEC Philips value added services, which include scoping, assessment, solution design, optimisation, configuration, integration, hosting and managed services. The company has a long and proven track record in the provision of enterprise solutions, systems integration, design services and ongoing support services to a network of enterprise customers across the UK.

For further information, please contact:

Ian Guest – NEC Philips Unified Solutions
Tel: +44 (0)1223 468777
Fax: +44 (0)1223 468340
Email: ian.guest@nec-philips.co.uk

Clare Granville / Kieran Kent – The itpr Partnership
Tel: +44 (0)1932 578800
Fax: +44 (0)1932 578801
Email: clareg@itpr.co.uk