

# Keller Williams Realty



## Customer

- Keller Williams Realty

## Industry

- Real Estate

## Challenges

- Hosted legacy solution
- High telecom costs
- Frequent outages
- Service & billing issues
- Significant equipment investment

## Solution

- IP communications platform: NEC UNIVERGE® Spherical®
- Unified communications: Spherical Desktop
- NEC Associate: Advanced Solution (Roseville, CA)

## Results

- Substantial cost savings
- ROI within a year
- Single solution across multiple sites
- Improved service from provider
- Simplified billing

Enterprise software-based IP communications is growing as more companies look to reduce cost and increase efficiency in the changing economy. The software-based approach is a viable alternative particularly to hosted communications models. As companies look to do more with less, on-premise, software-based solutions can deliver significant cost savings over hosted solutions, as well as improve the organization's scalability, performance, simplicity and control.

Keller Williams Realty, Inc. is currently the third largest residential, real-estate company in the United States. A franchise organization, the company has more than 75,000 agents in over 650 independently owned and operated offices throughout the US and Canada. When a Keller Williams Realty office in California needed to reduce telecom costs, the office replaced its hosted solution with NEC UNIVERGE® Spherical® for significant savings across three locations and ROI in less than a year.

## Challenges

Keller Williams Realty in Roseville, CA (a suburb of Sacramento) has approximately 370 agents. The office used a costly hosted solution for three years, which created a number of challenges. "We were getting reprimanded in our budget reviews because our telecom costs were the largest in the region," says Chris Apsley, Market Center Administrator, Keller Williams Realty Roseville. "We were also having outages on a routine basis, so once we were done with our contract, we knew we had to make a switch."

The office also had customer service and billing issues with their hosted solution provider. "We would call with an issue and have a ticket assigned to us one day, then follow up a day or two later and the ticket would be lost or non-existent," says Apsley. "The bill was impossible to read, we were often billed incorrectly and our provider was slow to adjust erroneous charges."

## Challenges (cont.)

Keller Williams Roseville purchased phones from a specific vendor to use with its hosted solution, which created another challenge. “We looked at a system from that vendor because we thought it would be a natural plug and play,” says Apsley. “The solution, however, was significantly more than we wanted to pay.”

Two other Keller Williams offices in the area—one in Elk Grove and another one in Fair Oaks—were also approaching contract end with the same hosted provider. Apsley was charged with finding solutions for all three offices. “We knew we didn’t want to go with another hosted solution,” says Apsley. “With the real estate industry in constant transition lately, not a day goes by without us needing to do something on the system so we wanted to buy our own and manage it internally.”

Apsley’s challenge was to find a reliable, premise-based solution for each of the three Keller Williams offices. The solution would reduce the offices’ monthly costs and allow them to use their existing phones.

## Solution

As Apsley researched various premise-based solutions, he consulted Sean Galliher at Advanced Solution, an authorized NEC dealer in Roseville. “Advanced Solution had been our outsourced IT department for the past few years,” says Apsley. “Since Sean was always thinking of ways to make our network more efficient, I figured I’d get his weigh-in about a new solution.”

Sean recommended NEC UNIVERGE Spherical, a software-based, IP communication solution that would provide a cost-effective, on-premise alternative to the offices’ hosted system. “The thing we’ve found with hosted solutions is that customers get nickel-and-dimed a lot,” says Galliher. “After factoring in all the ad-hoc charges, the Keller Williams offices were doubling and sometimes even tripling their monthly per-seat rate, so I knew Spherical would undoubtedly lower costs.”

As a software-based system, Spherical is an application that runs on the network. “I was a little surprised to get a recommendation for a software-based solution from our IT guy, but when he mentioned that it would save us money, I was all ears,” says Apsley. “As I researched voice systems more, I realized they are really integrated with IT infrastructure much more than they used to be, so it made a lot of sense.”

Apsley eventually decided on the Spherical solution. “Spherical was reasonably priced and its software platform was scalable to meet a business need specific to our industry,” says Apsley. “The other companies were going to deliver a system, but they weren’t going to manage our network—Advanced Solution was going to do both.”

With Spherical, Apsley was able to connect and manage all three Keller Williams offices with a single solution from a single location. “We decided the best scenario for us was to house the solution in an offsite data facility in a collocation then connect all three offices to it,” says Apsley.

The solution’s software-based approach also eliminated the need for new hardware. “We kind of went from an outside hosted solution to our own hosted solution located at an offsite facility, so we really didn’t have a big change in the ways of hardware,” adds Apsley. “Onsite, we had similar equipment to what we had before, so we didn’t need to add rack space in the additional offices, which made for a smooth transition.”

The Spherical solution also allowed the offices to use their existing phones. “The phones were based on the vendor’s version of SIP, which has always been an issue with just about anything relating to this specific vendor and their phones,” says Galliher. “Since Spherical allows standards-based (usually SIP), we were able to work around that issue and include the phones in KWR’s new solution.”

Keller Williams’s Spherical solution also includes new, fully integrated features that are customizable to improve agent productivity. “We have some large teams here so for them to have the ability to go in and program their auto attendant for their needs is a pretty huge feature that we didn’t have before,” says Apsley.

The solution also includes Spherical Desktop, a comprehensive suite of advanced, unified communications applications. The application provides voicemail to email, call forwarding and find-me/follow me functionality—all important features for users who aren’t always behind a desk. “Realtors spend most of their time out of the office showing properties,” says Apsley. “Spherical Desktop, enables better mobility, allowing realtors to choose where and how they need to communicate.”

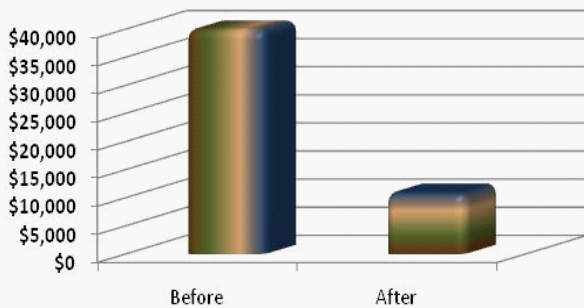
## Results

The NEC UNIVERGE Spherical solution delivered immediate savings across all three of the Keller Williams office locations. “With the hosted solution, our total monthly bill for all three offices was in the neighborhood of \$40,000,” says Apsley. “After implementing Spherical, our bill immediately dropped to \$16,000 a month, which included a two-year lease payment and carrier costs.”

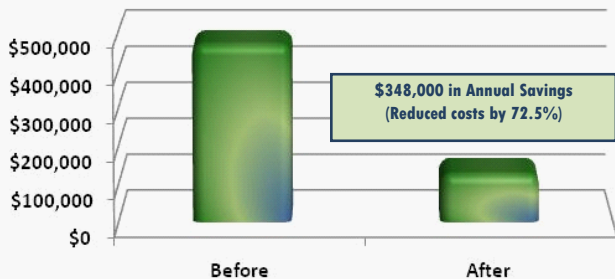
The solution reduced costs even more over time. “We actually finished our lease payments early, so now we only have about \$11,000 in carrier costs across all three sites and the equipment is owned outright,” says Apsley. “The Spherical solution is saving us about \$29,000 a month, reducing our costs to fractions of what they were with the hosted solution.”

Results (cont.)

Monthly Costs  
Before & After Sphericall



Annual Costs  
Before & After Sphericall



The Sphericall solution simplified billing and improved service for the offices. “We went from a complex, 150-page bill with our hosted provider to a one-page lease bill and a two-page carrier bill,” says Apsley. “We get to handle changes ourselves—and the time we spend making them is made up with the time we save from not having to follow up with our hosted provider.”

Advanced Solution has also helped improve service. “When we implemented the system, Advanced Solution was here on sight for a couple weeks, addressing any concerns, answering questions, training and helping users individually set up special features, says Apsley. “They have gone above and beyond every since...I think they have a 24-hour turn around for service requests, but they are usually here within the hour and sometimes even quicker... I can’t say enough about the service.”

Apsley also enjoys having better control of the solution. “With an operation this size, our offices are very much alive and in constant transition,” says Apsley. “Having control of the transitioning—from an administrator’s perspective—makes a world of difference.”

Apsley is pleased with Sphericall overall. “I think one of the best things I can say about NEC Sphericall is I forget about it..that’s because it works,” says Apsley. “I don’t have people complaining about service issues and I love the fact that it is a consistent, quality solution.”

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