



>THIS IS **THE WAY**

SIX GENERATIONS OF TRADITION AND
TECHNOLOGY COME TOGETHER

>THIS IS **NORTEL**TM



Case Study

Hancock Lumber

Over the past 158 years of doing business throughout the state of Maine and beyond, Hancock Lumber has remained at the forefront of its industry by consistently employing innovation to better meet the needs of its customers. Today that means state-of-the-art converged voice and data communications and mobility solutions from Nortel.

The scenario

One day the Hancock family of Maine decided to go into the lumber business. That was 158 years ago. They're still at it today.

In 158 years of doing business, six generations of the Hancock family have learned a few things about tradition and how it's woven into the grain of the lumber business. For example: coffee. Customers — at least those that Hancock serves, both wholesale and retail — are apt to appreciate a good cup of coffee, might even come to expect it.

Customer:

Hancock Lumber

Country:

USA

Industry:

Retail and wholesale lumber

Challenge:

To deploy a communications system that would streamline customer service in a new warehouse facility and keep a mobile team of employees in better communication with one another and the customer

Solution:

Nortel Business Communications Manager 400, providing converged voice and data communications, including a wireless solution provided over an IP infrastructure

You see, although a heavy hitter in the lumber industry — with various retail sites and three manufacturing locations, Hancock Lumber has always prided itself on delivering that old-time, small-town hardware store kind of personalized service.

“Traditionally,” explains Nikki Calden, Hancock Lumber’s Executive VP for technology, “the customer will show up at one of our locations. They’ll come up to the counter, place an order with the person there, get back into their vehicle, go out into the lumberyard with a paper ticket in their hand, hand it to one of our yard guys, get loaded up and get on out.” But not before, perhaps, a cup o’ joe, and certainly a little chat.

Well, that arrangement worked quite nicely for over a century and a half. But business is business, and the construction business is a decidedly competitive one — and so while a little coffee-talk never put anybody immediately out of business, time is simply much more of the essence these days.

“We have lots of small remodeler-type contractors, and we have a lot of do-it-yourselfers too,” says Calden. “Our focus is project driven, so anybody who has a project to do, no matter how small or big, that’s our primary customer. Still, 80-plus percent of our customers are large contractors; we service the professional builder.”

Hancock had a strategic plan for better servicing this clientele that included the construction of a new warehouse in Windham, Maine, and a new communications network to go with it.

“When we started talking about building a warehouse,” says Kevin Murphy, Hancock’s IT team manager, “we started looking at ways that we could introduce a mobile billing concept to improve worker productivity and customer wait times. Our criteria were pretty simple: we wanted a solution that was industry-standard and that was going to support any wireless handset.

“We chose Nortel.”

The solution

Hancock Lumber had a solid, ongoing relationship with Communication Technologies, Inc. (CTI), a leading Nortel distributor in the state of Maine. Tim Hiltz, Vice President of Marketing for CTI, felt that the Nortel Business Communications Manager would be an ideal choice for Hancock for a variety of reasons — most importantly the ability the solution has to incrementally grow into an IP environment at the company’s own pace.

The Business Communications Manager 400 (BCM400) is a compact, all-in-one platform for converged voice and data communications. The product supports open standards, allowing for integrated telephony and data services via traditional telephony, IP-enabled or pure IP telephony. Easy to manage, and scalable for sites with 30 to 200 users, the BCM400 offers a full suite of telephony, call center and mobility applications that are easily activated through key code access.

“The BCM gives Hancock the opportunity to migrate as they’re ready,” says Hiltz, “offering all IP or various components of IP — to get the best of both worlds. You can have a digital phone in your office and you can have an IP set out in the warehouse or any location. It’s not an either-or proposition. Companies can grow into the technology.”



Another feature of the BCM400 that perfectly matched Hancock Lumber's objectives was unified messaging, which converges voice, fax and e-mail messages onto a user's PC or laptop and can be managed by one standard application — Microsoft Outlook or Exchange, for example.

But enhanced convenience to its customers was the real bottom-line objective of this deployment.

"We're using a Nortel wireless 24-port security switch to enable our entire Windham location to run wirelessly," Murphy explains. "All of our commodity items in the warehouse are bar code labeled so that our yard workers can go up to a bin full of lumber, scan the code, enter the quantity and continue assisting the customer by loading the truck. After the truck is loaded, they press 'print,' and an invoice is printed at the end of the warehouse and the customer signs it on the way out. This drive-through solution, which uses handheld devices on the wireless network to communicate with our point-of-sale system, provides customers with a more convenient way to purchase their building materials."

"This solution is set up in a number of different ways," Calden elaborates. "Our primary use for mobile billing is to enable access to our point-of-sale system via a graphical interface that is run on simple-to-use handheld devices used by our yard guys. They approach a truck and the contractor gives them a card with their account name on it. They scan the card, and as soon as they press 'enter,' the device looks up the contractor's account and we can begin loading lumber on the truck immediately."

"In addition to our drive-through solution," says Murphy, "we have 35 tablet computer users throughout the company who can simply arrive at our Windham location, turn their laptops on, and be on the network — again, thanks to the Nortel wireless solution."

Hancock also has a team of kitchen designers who use the wireless network in display areas of its retail outlets. The designers, working with the customer, are able to create designs on their laptops while looking at the actual products.

The results

First, the good news for the more traditional-minded Hancock Lumber customer is that the coffee is still brewing. And the better news (at least for those who, despite the good company of the folks at Hancock, would prefer to get in and out post-haste) is that while Hancock Lumber is continuing to provide the same personalized service it has for the past 158 years, it's now doing so with the utmost in modern convenience.

"We tend to push the envelope technology-wise for this industry," says Calden, "and especially for a smaller, locally owned lumber yard. We utilize technology within our facilities and outside as well, in that we have salesmen who are out on the road 95-plus percent of their days, and they access our network in order to better service their customers."

"One of the greatest benefits we see right now is that our employees can dial directly into our central location using the voice over IP network, which of course saves us money," says Murphy. "We used to have several hundred dollars a month in in-state long distance phone calls from one location to another, with a point-to-point connection — that's gone away. There's a real return on this solution."



Established in 1848, Hancock Lumber is one of America's oldest and most distinguished family-owned lumber companies. Hancock has constantly evolved to meet the changing needs of its customers, communities and industry. Hancock Lumber's business philosophy is about stewardship. Each employee is a caretaker of the Hancock tradition of excellence and commitment to the community.

Murphy also points to the ease of use of the system: "The centralized management of all of the access points was extremely important to us. And support of industry standards: everybody who was brought into this project had to talk industry standards. We needed to be able to run any wireless device on this network, and Nortel was able to manage that very nicely."

But even for the more traditional customer, this Nortel communications solution has something to offer. Murphy explains: "One of the interesting things that having ubiquitous wireless has allowed us to do is to set up kiosks in the middle of the warehouse. At the Windom location, anywhere you are in the entire facility, the wireless network is present. In our new hardware center we have kiosks that are designed to be set up very quickly anywhere you want them. And by having the wireless there, we absolutely can do that — we can put a kiosk anywhere we want to. We can put technology in any corner. And that improves our ability to be better involved with our customer."

"The BCM400 is built to last for a good long time," adds CTT's Tim Hiltz. "Hancock isn't going to outgrow it anytime soon."

And neither will Hancock outgrow its customers, the technologically savvy or otherwise.

Communication Technologies, Inc.
is Maine's only Nortel Premium Advantage Partner. CTT is dedicated to serving the total enterprise network requirements of business customers throughout northern New England. CTT brings together the best highly-qualified communication professionals on Nortel equipment as well as the total network application.

Nortel is a recognized leader in delivering communications capabilities that enhance the human experience, ignite and power global commerce, and secure and protect the world's most critical information. Serving both service provider and enterprise customers, Nortel delivers innovative technology solutions encompassing end-to-end broadband, Voice over IP, multimedia services and applications, and wireless broadband designed to help people solve the world's greatest challenges. Nortel does business in more than 150 countries. For more information, visit Nortel on the Web at www.nortel.com.

For more information, contact your Nortel representative, or call 1-800-4 NORTEL or 1-800-466-7835 from anywhere in North America.

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In the United States:

Nortel
35 Davis Drive
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 USA

In Canada:

Nortel
8200 Dixie Road, Suite 100
Brampton, Ontario L6T 5P6 Canada

In Caribbean and Latin America:

Nortel
1500 Concorde Terrace
Sunrise, FL 33323 USA

In Europe:

Nortel
Maidenhead Office Park, Westacott Way
Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3QH UK
Phone: 00800 8008 9009 or
+44 (0) 870-907-9009

In Asia Pacific:

Nortel
Nortel Networks Centre, 1 Innovation Drive
Macquarie University Research Park
Macquarie Park, NSW 2109 Australia
Tel +61 2 8870 5000

In Greater China:

Nortel
Sun Dong An Plaza, 138 Wang Fu Jing Street
Beijing 10000 China
Phone: (86) 10 6510 8000