Aims Community College Reduces Phone System Workload by 30% Using Avaya Cloud Office

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Prior to the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, Aims had been looking to migrate from a traditional on-premises Avaya phone system that had been in operation for decades. Before the mass closure of school campuses, students, staff, and faculty traveled to Aims' campuses every day. Telework was possible using a VPN but was approved on a case-by-case basis. When necessity called for distance learning and remote work, Rhonda Johnson, Director, Network and Telecom for IT at Aims, knew the college's existing phone system could not sustain off-campus processes at scale.

Aims Community College is one of the most progressive community colleges in Colorado with more than 200 degree and certificate programs including everything from healthcare to aviation to agriculture. The college specializes in flexible education offerings including day and evening classes, online course options, and top-rated faculty, serving over 8,000 students across four campuses in northern Colorado.

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Johnson and her team of network and systems engineers began speaking with the Avaya and ConvergeOne teams about Avaya Cloud Office® by RingCentral® to solve for remote learning and overall collaboration. The cloud-based phone system represents a flexible alternative that can seamlessly support remote work with rich, enterprise-grade communications. After working from home with Avaya Cloud Office for a couple of months, the school was able to push the proof of concept through and get key decision-makers to approve the investment. Aims began converting in August of 2020 with the goal of moving pre-set groups of users over every month. The college was able to accelerate that and move 650 of its 800 staff members within a short two months, with the option to flexibly add new users as needed.

With Avaya Cloud Office, Johnson and her team have been able to reduce their workload on phone systems by a minimum of 30% while increasing uptime—all with no net gain of cost and increased communications functionality. "The move to Avaya Cloud Office during the pandemic was a significant contributor to our seamless move to remote services. It supported us through the pandemic and will be a key service as we continue on with our hybrid environment and new telework policy," said Brad Yoder, CIO/CTO of Aims Community College.

Unparalleled Flexibility, Uncompromised Quality

Aims began immediately seeing productivity improvements using Avaya Cloud Office with the ability for users to reliably communicate anytime, anywhere, using any Internet-connected device. As an example, the college offers many work-study opportunities, which are depended on by students for tuition, expenses, and even in some cases, money to eat. When the pandemic hit, Aims made the decision to continue distributing its regular work-study paychecks even if students could not be at their jobs on campus. After moving to Avaya Cloud Office, the college was able to seamlessly allow work-study students to continue work that normally would have to be done on campus, regardless of where students were located. Students could work at home or virtually anywhere else using the Avaya Cloud Office Web app or the Avaya Cloud Phone app downloaded to their personal device. This was a huge benefit for the college. "Students can now be in a customer service queue and answer questions and collaborate in real-time. None of them would have been able to work off-premises without having Avaya Cloud Office," said Johnson.

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In addition to untethering staff members from their on-premises desk phone, Avaya Cloud Office opened the ability for part-time staff and faculty to have a dedicated work phone number. This is especially important for a community college like Aims, where approximately 80% of working staff balance teaching with other jobs and at-home responsibilities. Before Avaya Cloud Office, only tenured staff with dedicated offices were permitted a dedicated phone number. Now all staff and faculty—tenured or not—can call, meet, and message anywhere on any device with a dedicated Aims phone number. There's no mixing of personal and business communications, and all communications are organized and easily manageable across different devices.

Staff and faculty also enjoy advanced features like voicemail-to-text (which helped the college improve productivity and reduce costs by no longer needing to pay for voicemail licenses), automatic and manual call recording, custom ringtones for work versus personal calls, and sequential ringing.

The solution has also proven advantageous for hiring and retention. With Avaya Cloud Office, Aims can bring people in for certain positions remotely that could never be hired before. The college also has longstanding employees that have had to move to take care of family members during the pandemic, all who can remain employed regardless of location.

Also important to Aims was the ability to easily create IVRs for dozens of call queues, from student transfers to veteran affairs to their financial department. Using Avaya Cloud Office, the college has been able to dramatically improve its ability to route calls directly from students, staff, and the public with simple, clear IVR instructions.

Simplified IT Management and Better Functionality at No Additional Cost

The flexible nature of Avaya Cloud Office works well not just for faculty, staff, and working students but also Johnson and her team. Just like everyone else on campus, Aims' IT team can now work from home or virtually anywhere else using the solution.

As a public cloud system, Avaya Cloud Office is also exponentially easier for them to manage. "We can log in anywhere using any device to view information, make changes, and securely monitor communications," said Johnson. Everything from managing office numbers to setting up an auto receptionist can be done with the touch of a finger to ensure communications remain available when needed.

"Before Avaya Cloud Office, we had one 'telecom person' who was our go-to for all things related to the on-premises phone system. The old system was incredibly complex to figure out because it had been patched onto for decades. It was stressful if he went on vacation or for any reason couldn't be on campus as we had less-than-ideal coverage. With Avaya Cloud Office we don't have to worry about this anymore. Every person on our team knows the system inside and out, and now we're all equally accessible regardless of location."

Leading the Future of Education with Flexible, Digital Communications

With more individuals getting vaccinated and students returning to school in waves, Aims Community College is working to create a permanent hybrid learning and working environment enabled by Avaya Cloud Office, with the goal of creating more flexible, personalized experiences that matter. The school aims to be fully operational in a hybrid mode by the fall semester of 2021.

"COVID-19 changed a lot about how we think and operate at Aims. Physical presence is appreciated, but things happen—life happens. With Avaya Cloud Office, we can be more adaptable and flexible with the ability to solve problems more creatively. We're thankful to Avaya for all their great help," said Johnson.

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![Avaya logo]

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About Aims Community College

Aims Community College is a public community college serving northern Colorado with locations in Greeley, Windsor, Fort Lupton, and Loveland. Aims has more than 200 degree and certificate programs and provides day and night classes. Aims was founded in 1967 and the first class graduated in 1969.

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About Avaya

Businesses are built by the experiences they provide, and every day millions of those experiences are delivered by Avaya Holdings Corp. (NYSE: AVYA). Avaya is shaping what's next for the future of work, with innovation and partnerships that deliver game-changing business benefits. Our cloud communications solutions and multi-cloud application ecosystem power personalized, intelligent, and effortless customer and employee experiences to help achieve strategic ambitions and desired outcomes. Together, we are committed to help grow your business by delivering Experiences that Matter.

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