



## Lincoln Memorial University Enhances Multicampus Communications with Avaya Cloud Office®

**LMU**  
Lincoln Memorial University

[www.lmunet.edu](http://www.lmunet.edu)

Growth and expansion are a good thing unless you have aging phone systems during a pandemic that aren't centralized and can't support the heavy collaboration needed to create a safe, remote work environment. Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) needed simpler connectivity across multiple campus locations, ease of use and management due to a small but nimble IT team as well as cost efficiencies. They found this and more with Avaya Cloud Office® by RingCentral®.

Founded in 1897, Lincoln Memorial University is not only a highly regarded private liberal arts college but a living piece of history. The university was founded by Oliver Otis Howard, a United States Army officer and a Union general in the American Civil War, as part of a promise to President Abraham Lincoln. Today over 120 years later, Lincoln Memorial University has a beautiful 1,000-acre wooded campus with 43 academic, administrative, and residential buildings. The school's main campus location is in Harrogate, Tennessee, with additional campus locations in Knoxville, Tennessee and Tampa, Florida.

When Michael Disney, Chief Technology Officer, first started at LMU 14 years ago, the campus was small with just a few buildings. The steady growth of the university has challenged Disney and his IT team in consideration with how many projects they can take on. "Having a smaller IT team makes things easier in many ways, but it can be overwhelming," he explained. As CTO, Disney is always trying to find new technology that will ease burdens for his team while pushing the university towards digital transformation.

When the global pandemic hit, Disney opted first for a 90-day free trial, and upon learning more about Avaya Cloud Office by RingCentral made his decision to go with Avaya. “I had heard about Avaya Cloud Office at that time, and I thought it could be a great way to get the best of both worlds: RingCentral’s cloud platform with Avaya’s technical expertise, scale, and partner network,” he explained. The university also had three aging Nortel (since acquired by Avaya) phone systems that needed to be replaced soon. The disruption of 2020, coupled with the university’s end-of-life phone systems, drove LMU to decide on Avaya Cloud Office.

“The quality of service we got – and still get – from Avaya and its partner, Meridian is unbelievable, and the pricing was less than what we were paying to run our legacy phone system. On top of that we got the Avaya name. You know the system is going to be reliable and high-performing, and our teams are familiar with Avaya having used an Avaya phone system for so long. Everything has a similar look and feel, which means less interruption during the workday trying to train and teach on a new system.”

## **A Single, Cohesive Communications Solution with Avaya Cloud Office by RingCentral**

For Disney, Avaya Cloud Office ticked all LMU’s boxes of requirements. The university was able to replace its aging phone systems while easing the burden on IT having to support hardware in-house, all while saving money compared to its former setup. The breadth of communications was also a game-changer. “In moving to Avaya Cloud Office it’s like we jumped a decade in terms of technology. Before, we were using multiple different systems for things like voicemail, SMS, and fax. Being able to tie everything together with Avaya Cloud Office enabled us to rid ourselves of the cost and management of those other systems, which also makes our workday so much easier,” he explained. “It’s amazing to have an app that we can use on our personal cell phone for calling, texting, listening to work voicemails, and joining meetings from anywhere. This has increased our ability to be responsive and mobile which during these times are important services for students, staff, and administration.”

This centralization of communications has also been major for LMU’s IT team. “When I’m away from my office handling what is needed and see that my desk phone is ringing, I can stop and answer it on my cell phone and the caller is none the wiser. The communications experience is better than ever,” Disney said.



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In moving to Avaya Cloud Office, LMU no longer has the need for traditional desk phones if it wishes as communications can be handled across any Internet-connected device (laptop, cell phone, tablet). “Our helpdesk team, which is the biggest area in our IT department, can do work orders before or after hours where they won’t be interrupting people during their workday. Before, these employees had to be tethered to the desk and were limited in what they could accomplish without causing disruptions. The productivity gains are through the roof,” he explained. Avaya Cloud Office also allows different teams (for example, the IT helpdesk department) to create groups for faster and more targeted communication and collaboration.

Elsewhere across the main campus, the financial aid department uses Avaya Cloud Office as a work order system. When a counselor sees that a front office worker has put a new task in the system, they will review the task details and then come out and get the student and their family (usually in the waiting room, but now from their car with a COVID-driven virtual waiting system).

Avaya Cloud Office makes connectivity easy and secure for LMU’s 1,300 employees across all campus locations, centralized through one firewall. Users need only to do a four-digit dial to reach any employee working out of their main Harrogate campus or branch campuses of Knoxville and Tampa. As the university

grows, it can seamlessly connect to new campuses. “Avaya Cloud Office is extremely future-proofed. You just take the phone, plug it into the switch, connect to the Internet and it works. We can relax knowing that upgrades will automatically happen at no extra cost. Before we used to have come in at midnight to manually do upgrades and hope everything went well so we could go back home and go to bed. With Avaya Cloud Office everything is included, meaning we can focus more on higher priority IT initiatives – and rest easy at night.”

**Lower Costs with Better System Performance, Management, and Analytics**

As mentioned, the cost of Avaya Cloud Office ended up being less than what LMU was paying to manage and maintain its existing on-premises phone systems. And at this lower cost the university is benefiting from higher performance with cloud in a low-risk environment. With Avaya Cloud Office, LMU was able to start experimenting with cloud-based communications in a flexible consumption model that leveled off monthly IT expenses with the ability to stop at any time. After a few months, Disney saw that system performance and quality of service remained steadfast, despite its main campus being in a rural area prone to having connectivity challenges.

## CHALLENGES

- Aging and disparate phone systems
- Lean IT team that needed more time to focus on higher priority initiatives
- Fragmented communications, which added costs and complexity

## VALUE CREATED

- Cost savings with a flexible monthly subscription model with room for growth
- Rich, integrated, cloud-based communications adding new features for collaboration
- Ease of use and management for IT

## SOLUTION USED

- Avaya Cloud Office by RingCentral

Another advantage, particularly for Disney, was the system's simplified administration and analytics. "One of the installers we had been working with showed us the analytics, and it was pretty incredible to see everything in one simple dashboard regardless of the device I'm using," he said. In sorting calls by quality level, for example, Disney learned that over the course of two weeks the university only had nine poor quality calls out of 3,500 likely due to external network issues. "Avaya Cloud Office provides us with much more insight than we had in the past, and in a much easier way."

As an educational institution, it's also vital that LMU is in compliance with Kari's Law and Ray Baum's Act, both which deal with E911. Kari's Law (which went into effect in February 2020) eliminates any requirement that a prefix or digit (such as 8 or 9) be used to access an outside line allowing for direct dialing of 911. It also mandates that a designated person (i.e., a security team or front desk attendant) be notified that a 911 call has been placed. Ray Baum's Act (which went into effect in January 2021), emphasizes the importance of making dispatchable location information from 911 calls available to Public Safety Answering Points, regardless of the communications platform being used. LMU has taken these measures very seriously, and Avaya Cloud Office ensures compliance with these life-saving laws.

Disney looks forward to the ongoing benefits of Avaya Cloud Office as LMU continues to deploy the solution across its newer campus in Tampa.

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**LMU**

Lincoln Memorial University

### About Lincoln Memorial University

Founded in 1897, Lincoln Memorial University is a private liberal arts university with a main campus in Harrogate, Tennessee. LMU's 1,000-acre campus borders on Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. LMU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It has 1,300 employees and 4,885 students across multiple campus locations (Harrogate, TN; Knoxville, TN; Tampa, FL)

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## About Avaya

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter.

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Experiences  
That Matter