

# Case Study

innovaphone AG - PURE IP-COMMUNICATIONS

:: VoIP PBX Installation at Vergölst GmbH ::

## Vergölst GmbH

**Service is extremely important at Germany's most renowned tyre specialist. It includes customers being able to reach their Vergölst specialists easily – even when droves of customers flock to them at the beginning of the winter and spring seasons. In order to be able to better control the distribution of calls, to simplify the maintenance of the systems and at the same time to reduce the effort needed, about 200 specialist branches at Vergölst GmbH have been equipped with new telephone systems from innovaphone. The changeover process was extremely demanding from a logistical point of view and was accompanied by alcera Kommunikationstechnik GmbH.**

"Guter Service heißt gute Fahrt". This is Germany's most well known tyre specialist's catchy slogan in German and could be translated as "Good service for a good trip". Some 350 specialist branches across Germany, from Friedrichshafen in the very South of Germany to Kiel in the very North, provide a professional service for cars – and have been doing so for a good eight decades. However, Vergölst's business is no longer limited to a pure tyre service. For many years the company has been providing car servicing, brake service, installation of particle filters, fitting windscreens and shock absorbers as well as servicing air conditioning.

One major obligation in customer services: customers have to be able to reach the branches easily and the telephone is still the main communication link to customers. This explains why the company's IT department was searching for a solution in order to uni-

fy the telephone infrastructure across all locations. Prior to the cooperation with innovaphone, the individual company locations mostly had their own different telephone solutions: there was a wide array of different systems from analogue telephone systems to ISDN systems with one or more channels, some rented, some bought. This proliferation resulting from strong growth had its price: remote maintenance was impossible, something that is totally normal practise today. Central administration of the PBXs? No way. Furthermore, the heterogeneous PBX infrastructure made it impossible to integrate any ERP and CRM systems.

One other item was a real headache for the Vergölst IT managers: the telephone systems in the branches were not only very unreliable, often failing, they were also quickly at their capacity limits. Especially during the periods when everyone needs their tyres changing: in spring and autumn when the branches are inundated with requests for appointments, the old telephone systems were increasingly unable to deal with such inundations of calls. At worst a customer would get stuck in the wait queue for minutes on end - an unacceptable situation for a service orientated company like Vergölst.

Therefore, the IT managers began looking for an alternative and were soon confronted by innovaphone – a provider which

would be able to live up to the company's demanding requirements. Vergölst's requirements on the telephone concept included: a unified, reliable, flexible and especially cost effective communication infrastructure for all locations. It should be easy to manage and easy to integrate its own developed ERP and CRM systems.

Vergölst was especially taken by the fact that the innovaphone solution meant that maintenance could take place centrally and that all changes could be replicated easily to all active subscribers. This innovaphone principle would reduce maintenance efforts significantly. The central maintenance of the system thus brings the tyre specialist tangible cost advantages. In the past it had been necessary for even small maintenance jobs to be done by external service technicians directly in the branches, now internal specialists are able to do this easily from the company headquarters. The IT department can access any device in any location over a web browser.

The innovaphone solution also has very convincing flexibility. The company required the existing DECT systems to be integrated into the new solution. This was not a problem as the innovaphone concept is based entirely on open standards. The good price/performance ratio also spoke in favour of the Sindelfingen based manufacturer. The IT managers were looking not only at the pure



*Service is extremely important at Vergölst*



investment costs but also at the running and maintenance costs. Taking total cost of ownership into consideration, innovaphone was ahead of all other manufacturers.

However, there were extensive organisational and logistical efforts needed to enable the changeover which included ensuring the requirements were met for installing 290 systems with 685 fixed line and 420 wireless telephones as well as 65 repeaters. To do this, all branches were also equipped with state-of-the-art structured wiring. Approximately 75,000 metres of cables were laid in total. The technicians also installed new data cabinets and some 1,400 new data outlets.

The alcera team, Vergölst's IT partner, delivered an excellent logistical service. After the pilot phase was successfully completed, the new systems were delivered, installed and equipped with a modern reporting software in three phases between August 2009 and August 2010. Since the end of 2010, every location also has an answer phone. The planning and execution of this rollout, with over 350 branches across the entire Federal Republic of Germany, was complex and required many an extra evening or weekend shift.

The IT managers at Vergölst were very impressed with the pragmatic course of action. The alcera service engineers paid attention to seasonal happenings and postponed any actions during the busy seasonal change periods at short notice. This was only possible because the innovaphone solutions allow especially smooth migration. In addition, the VoIP gateways at headquarters were looped in before the trunk line without any changes to the existing telephone system. After a transition phase in which Vergölst ran both systems in parallel, the old system was closed down in a second step. The changeover went without a single hitch.

The IT managers responsible for the project made a very positive summary. They called the collaboration with innovaphone

"exemplary". The technology from Sindelfingen has also been met with positive comments from staff. They hardly noticed the changeover. In a questionnaire, 98% of all locations said that they were happy with their new equipment and the roll-out.

The entire company is now using the first unified telephone system in the history of the company, therefore fixed costs for administration have seen a noticeable reduction, the expensive maintenance costs and leasing costs have disappeared. The flexible licensing model is also kind on the IT budget. Vergölst makes use of floating licenses. This means all licenses are managed and bound centrally. The branches take on the licenses dynamically as and when they need them. The advantages of this model are obvious: licenses that are no longer needed in one branch, are put back in the licensing pool and can be used by another, growing branch.

One other cost factor has disappeared with the changeover to VoIP: the number of base connections could be reduced drastically. The branches that previously had several base connections, principally only need one connection to the public network in the current telephone network. In the long term, the costs saved through reducing the number of base connections alone justifies the investment in the VoIP PBX.

Thanks to the new system, every branch can now use and update a central telephone directory easily over the intranet. Internal calls can take place over the network. Further advantages: calls can be directed intelligently and can be forwarded to the call centre as necessary if a branch is inundated with calls. Call diversions are also easy to set up from branch to branch. This means no calls will go unanswered.

Maintenance or software updates are taken care of remotely. Everything else is automatic, no matter how many extensions there are. Extensions are also child's play: if a sys-



Vergölst branch in Neu-Ulm

tem needs additional extensions, the IT specialists simply assign an IP address and a telephone number to the devices. The telephones are then sent to the relevant branch where the employees then plug them in.

Migration is an ongoing project, with no end in sight: a call centre software from Voxtron was recently integrated into the innovaphone system. This should improve the efficiency even more at Vergölst for distributing calls at busy times across Germany, and even across Europe in the medium term with European subsidiaries. In the not too distant future, Vergölst intends to extend the UC infrastructure to a unified multi-site communication platform in which telephony is just one of many components. The German trading company, belonging to the Contitrade group, is thus following the strategic approach which Contitrade has set for all of its locations in Europe.

In addition to Germany, the country units in Ireland and Switzerland have also been equipped with innovaphone technology, further countries are to follow. Axel Hawner, responsible for IT Management at European level and responsible for the European roll-out made a conscious company-wide decision in favour of innovaphone. At the end of the day, innovaphone's sophisticated location concept provides maximum flexibility and investment protection for a company with such dynamic growth as Contitrade. Therefore, innovaphone is a strategic IT partner with which Contitrade will maintain an especially close collaboration.