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Advertising legend Young & Rubicam implements IP telephony solution with help from FusionStorm.

Even if the name of the company doesn't ring a bell, you are most certainly familiar with Young & Rubicam's work. The 82-year-old advertising agency has left an indelible mark on American pop culture.

If you've ever wanted to be all that you can be, or even if you merely thought you'd like to be a Pepper, then you can thank the creative folks at Young & Rubicam. The company also paired Jell-O and Bill Cosby, produced the world's first color television commercial and set up the first client-sponsored daytime dramas — more commonly known as “soap operas.” Over the years, Y&R also showed us that quality is Job 1, a mind is a terrible thing to waste and a kid'll eat the middle of an Oreo first.

A subsidiary of WPP Group since 2000, Young & Rubicam ranks among the world's leading marketing communications companies. Recently, however, the company's San Francisco office ran into a communications problem it couldn't solve on its own. With its aging telephone system and elements of its network infrastructure in need of an overhaul, Y&R called on FusionStorm.

The Right Credentials

Y&R San Francisco had preliminary discussions with a handful of technology vendors about implementing an IP telephony solution and upgrading its network to handle both voice and data traffic. FusionStorm eventually was selected for a number of reasons, including a strong track record with converged networks, a string of successful telephony implementations and an impressive list of staff certifications. A strong relationship with Cisco Systems didn't hurt, either.

“Cisco actually put me in touch with FusionStorm,” said Herman Brown, IT manager for Y&R San Francisco. “I spoke with them and was impressed with their staff, the professionalism of everyone I dealt with and their knowledge of

Cisco's Voice over IP solutions. The fact that they are a local company was also a factor. We had some discussions with a company in Detroit, but I just didn't feel as comfortable as I did with FusionStorm.”

Gordon Rothstein, FusionStorm account executive, and his sales engineer joined Brown for an initial assessment of Y&R San Francisco's site. The existing Avaya Definity phone system was more than 15 years old and becoming increasingly difficult to manage and maintain. Since a replacement was necessary, Brown knew he wanted to move toward an IP telephony solution that would offer cost savings as well as numerous productivity and converged communications benefits.

“We didn't have anyone on staff that was knowledgeable about managing the old system,” said Brown. “We could add and delete users, things of that nature, but we had issues when you got into more complex configurations or any special features.”

Be Prepared

As a prelude to any Voice over IP (VoIP) project, FusionStorm conducts a methodical assessment of the data network to make certain it can support voice traffic. The FusionStorm team examines all the network routers and switches, determines the most efficient call flow and conducts a needs analysis that describes what will be required to ensure power availability and network redundancy.

“The network could handle voice traffic, but it wasn't the recommended solution,” said Brown. “Actually, the life expectancy on one of our switches had exceeded Cisco's time frame, so Cisco was no longer supplying support for that product. I decided to seize the opportunity to upgrade our network as well.”

Y&R San Francisco's offices are housed on two floors of a building in the city's financial district. The project involved replacing a Cisco 2900 Catalyst switch with a Catalyst 3750 switch on the



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ninth floor, and replacing 5500 and 4006 switches on the eighth floor with two 4500 switches. In addition, FusionStorm implemented dual Fibre Channel connections between floors for network redundancy, and added Power over Ethernet on both floors to provide redundant, in-line power for all phones.

Redundancy was also addressed on the new voice side of the network with the installation of two Cisco CallManager IP PBXs and two Cisco 2821 voice gateways to support three lines for carrying voice traffic — two PRIs and one T1 line.

“Redundancy was a big issue because that was one of our main concerns with our previous network,” said Brown. “I wanted to make sure that should one switch or port fail on the Fibre Channel, we’d still be able to communicate between the two floors.”

Flexibility and More

With the system, Y&R San Francisco had the flexibility to install multiple types of phones with various feature sets to meet different needs of more than 150 staff members. Most end-users received standard Cisco 7960 phones, while executives were upgraded to the 7970 IP color phones, which can be customized for XML-based services to provide users with access to a variety of information such as stock quotes, employee directories or any Web-based content. More basic models were installed in conference rooms and public areas such as the lobby and kitchen. In addition, Brown’s IT staffers were outfitted with wireless phones, allowing them to be accessible at all times through a three-digit extension even as they move throughout the building.

One of the unique features of the new system is a Cisco Unity voice-mail system that FusionStorm integrated with Y&R’s Microsoft Exchange Mail Server. With this unified messaging system, voice mails can be accessed through the e-mail inbox. When staff members are traveling, they have the ability to check all their messages without having to make a long-distance call into Y&R’s phone system. In addition, FusionStorm provided “soft-phone” software that allows traveling staffers to call anyone in the office via a three-digit extension, eliminating more long-distance tolls.

The elimination of toll charges is far from the only cost-saving feature of the new system. Y&B had been paying \$7200 per month for leasing and maintaining its old system. Brown figures he has cut his monthly costs in half with the VoIP solution. In addition, the system is so easy to manage that he has eliminated all of the \$250-per-hour tech support service calls the old system required.

“The Voice over IP system has such an intuitive design that it is very user-friendly,” said Brown. “And one of the great things about FusionStorm has been their willingness to sit down and share the technology with you — a lot of systems integrators won’t do that. But I spent many a day with FusionStorm’s engineers configuring the CallManager and the voice gateways, so I feel pretty comfortable with handling most maintenance issues without assistance.”

In addition to providing detailed information about the system, FusionStorm also went to great lengths to emulate many of the calling features Y&R’s staff had become accustomed to with the old system. As a result, Brown said, he hasn’t had to conduct any user training sessions because everyone is so comfortable with the new system.

“FusionStorm really went above and beyond the call of duty in a lot of cases,” Brown said. “They did their homework up front, knew exactly what we needed and provided a detailed project plan with sign-off all along the way. When it was all completed, the cutover to the new system went very smoothly. It was definitely very well thought out.

“The staff, the engineers, everyone I’ve deal with at FusionStorm have all been very professional. I would highly recommend them to anyone considering an IP telephony installation. We’ve been extremely pleased.”