



Peoria Public Schools Enhances Security, Communications with Wave IP



Customer Snapshot

PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Peoria, Illinois



LOCATIONS

28 schools,
32 buildings total

SYSTEM USERS

1,000+

VERTICAL SOLUTION

- Wave IP Communications Platform
- Wave IP-based 911 System
- Wave Live Image
- ViewPoint Desktop

Like all other school districts, safety and security is a top priority for Peoria Public Schools. One of the largest school districts in Illinois, Peoria Public Schools serves more than 13,000 students and has more than one thousand employees. To achieve its objective to enhance the safety and security of pupils, faculty, staff and visitors at its more than 30 facilities, the district recognized it was imperative to upgrade its entire communications infrastructure to ensure more efficient, streamlined communication.

Enhanced Connectivity for Greater Security

Establishing consistent connectivity was beyond the capabilities of the district's original communications system. The network was piecemeal at best, with a mix of phones (some digital from an earlier upgrade attempt) that provided only basic telephony, with few features that could contribute to the district's organizational priorities. Fewer than half its buildings were connected via a centralized communications platform, with the remaining facilities relying on standalone systems. This led to inconsistent dial plans that made it difficult to intuitively locate and contact staff.

Peoria Public Schools elected to work with Vertical Communications® to develop a plan that would deliver the critical features and significant cost savings the school district required. The ability to leverage advanced communications technology that would enhance security was a huge factor for choosing Vertical and its Wave IP communications platform.

"We contemplated other solutions, but few were able to offer the sophisticated capabilities we wanted at a competitive price point," explained Chris Sies, technology foreman at Peoria Public Schools. "Most importantly, none were able to incorporate our legacy phones to protect our investment in existing technology."

CASE STUDY

Vertical's first order of business: Consolidate the district's 14 existing servers down to seven Wave IP platforms. This literally cut the district's communications infrastructure footprint in half while providing consistent connectivity across the campus.

Network consolidation also led to substantial cost savings. The transition away from legacy phone lines allowed Peoria Public Schools to drastically reduce the amount it spent on associated carrier fees by routing voice traffic over a low-cost IP network. The district originally maintained two to four legacy lines across more than 20 of its buildings. After migrating to the Wave IP system, the majority of these lines were eliminated, saving close to \$50 per line with a total savings of nearly \$3,000 per month.

"The savings have been so dramatic, we were able to renegotiate the contract with our phone service provider as well as eliminate older technology. This helps us tremendously, especially since the federally-funded E-Rate program we have been using to subsidize these costs is going away," said Sies.

Safety, Redundancy and Security Rule

According to Kari Holloway, Vertical's regional sales consultant, one of the features that was of greatest interest to the district was the Wave IP's emergency communications capabilities.

"The system can pinpoint the exact location of any 911 call made within the district down to the individual classroom, allowing staff and first responders to act more swiftly and effectively. This substantially reduces response time, which is critical in any emergency situation," said Holloway.

The Wave IP is also versatile enough to accommodate many third-party solutions, providing additional capabilities that enhance security and efficiency. For example, the district integrated its new door-entry system with the Wave IP platform, allowing administrators and staff to control access to school buildings by easily communicating with and authenticating the identity of anyone requesting entry.

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Chris Sies
Technology Foreman
Peoria Public Schools

Peoria Public Schools also needed to upgrade its back-up and disaster recovery system. Holloway suggested Vertical's Live Image application, which provides ongoing "snapshots" of the network that help technicians quickly restore it to its last known state in the event of a system failure. "We'd have very little time to get the network up and running in the event of a failure," says Sies. "This makes our job much easier if the network ever goes down."

Ease of Use = Increased Productivity

District staff have found the Wave IP's user interface very intuitive and flexible. Sies notes he has had fewer complaints about the upgrade than he's ever experienced in his years of implementing technology refreshes, citing its ease of use.

"In the past, the IT team was constantly asked to program individual phone buttons for staff members. Now, employees can create personalized directories themselves, which makes them more efficient and minimizes the burden on our IT team. The staff is so comfortable with the system's new softphone features, they prefer it over their desktop phones.

"The Wave IP system has been a genuine boon to our capabilities, and it delivers so much more than just connectivity," Sies concluded. "It contributes to our ability to run the entire organization in a more resourceful, cost-effective and secure manner, no matter what circumstances arise. It's a vital asset to our facilities."

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