

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Charities Find Innovative Ways To Cut Costs

(NAPSA)—Even in tough economic times, Americans have found ways to help those in need.

Forty-six percent of people whose own situation had “deteriorated” financially still planned to donate something to charity, according to a recent online survey from Giving USA Foundation. Yet in spite of that desire to give, many nonprofits report that, on the whole, it is harder to keep the coffers full. As a result, a number of them are looking at ways to enhance their donor outreach efforts, while also keeping overhead as low as possible.

In some cases, that’s meant using money-saving technologies to help reduce operating expenses. For instance, an exciting technology that stems from the evolution of voice over IP and is known as “IP unified communications” simplifies phone systems by delivering all communications modes—voice, data and video—over the Internet. Experts say the unified communications systems can save organizations thousands of dollars in toll charges each year by finding and using the lowest-cost route to deliver calls. And since most systems are relatively easy to manage and maintain, they can have a lower total cost of ownership than other phone solutions.

This technology was recently implemented by Heifer International, a not-for-profit group that works to end hunger and poverty. When budget restraints prevented this global charity from replacing aging and costly traditional phone



Not-for-profits have used technology to help save money.

systems, Heifer purchased a ShoreTel IP UC system, complete with 200 phones at 11 branches.

In addition to saving money, the unified communications technology helps assure that calls get routed to a live person, virtually guaranteeing that callers hoping to make donations or purchase charitable gifts reach representatives quickly. It can also route calls to any phone an employee selects, and still deliver the same phone features available in the corporate office. Plus, the service uses low-energy switches, which were a smart fit with Heifer International’s commitment to helping the planet.

“The system keeps our employees and volunteers connected and the low cost of ownership helps us do more with our donations,” says Cedric Lambert, director of infrastructure solutions at Heifer International. And at the same time, he explains, it “helps us further our green initiatives.”

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