

Sprint and U.S. Financial Life Understand the Value of Teamwork

The exceptional bond Sprint fostered with U.S. Financial Life Insurance led to a top-down communications relationship that all began with a PBX machine.

Challenge

U.S. Financial Life was on a roll. The insurance company's rating, which jumped from B+ to A+ in six years, contributed to a growth spurt of 20% last year and is currently projecting growth of 12% for this year. They were doing more business than ever before, but because of spiraling growth, their communications needs were being pushed way beyond their limits. To expand capacity, Erik Simmons, Vice President of Operations for U.S. Financial Life, determined that in order to best manage business growth, they needed:

- A new telecom system. Their old PBX machine was cumbersome to work on, and they needed a system that would scale with their growth while being easy to maintain
- Migration of their antiquated token ring network to an Ethernet network, which was easier and cheaper to maintain, and more scalable
- A cost-efficient expansion into a branch office

The key to selecting a new telecommunications provider was finding one that would understand, support, and enable U.S. Financial Life's primary objective—self-sufficiency. They needed to accomplish their goals without outsourcing or hiring new staff. Such a tall order required a vendor with large-scale capabilities who would also take a personal interest in U.S. Financial Life to understand the company's unique needs.

Solution

The first step was to replace the PBX machine. Most vendors U.S. Financial Life spoke with all offered the same unit—often at the exact same price. What set Sprint apart was their ongoing interest in the company's needs and its operations. Sprint associates made frequent visits to the company. They asked questions about the business, where they wanted to be, and details about its infrastructure. "It's the kind of interest we didn't expect," says Simmons.

After analyzing U.S. Financial Life's business and communications network, the Sprint team proposed a complete turnkey solution that even the company's non-technical staff could understand. The Sprint teamwork approach leveraged the team members' knowledge and skills, saved time, and supported the customer's self-sufficiency objective.

Before they submitted the proposal, the Sprint team spoke to U.S. Financial Life's technical staff and its end users to ensure the plan was both practical and gratifying. "Sprint understood we needed everyone's input to solve this complex problem," says Simmons. "The Sprint team effort resulted in a well-thought-out solution covering many phases." With the new PBX installation, U.S. Financial Life enjoyed new capabilities such as improved voicemail, automatic call distribution, hunt groups, and call forwarding.



U.S. Financial Life Insurance is a member of the MONY family of companies, which became wholly owned subsidiaries of AXA Financial, Inc. on July 8, 2004. U.S. Financial Life received a financial strength industry rating of A+ (Superior) from A.M. Best, the nation's oldest and most recognized insurance rating organization, immediately upon becoming a subsidiary of AXA Financial. U.S. Financial Life's exclusive common-sense approach to underwriting evaluates each applicant individually, ensuring the best possible coverage.

For more information, please visit www.usfli.com.



Following the success of the PBX installation, the Sprint team set about reworking U.S. Financial Life's networking challenges. Using Cisco equipment, Sprint migrated the company from token ring to Ethernet technology in 30 days. The solution offered a more stable environment with less downtime, faster connections, and simpler management.

For the company's branch office, Sprint IP VPNSM was the ideal solution because it allowed U.S. Financial Life to simply and securely extend its network through a pre-existing Internet connection that required no new equipment. "Sprint recommended a solution that took us through all phases of growth, and then advised us how it would expand with our needs rather than selling us multiple products," says Simmons.

Finally, Sprint introduced the power of wireless technology to U.S. Financial Life. After deploying ten Sprint PCS Vision Smart Device TreoTM 600's by palmOne and four Sprint PCS Connection Cards,TM the company's IT team has become more flexible and effective. Programmers who had been tied to the office between 8:00 and 5:00 can now control their workday by connecting to network resources from wherever they are. According to Simmons, the added flexibility has been a real boost to morale and productivity. When tackling particularly tough projects, many staff members work remotely. Working without office distractions allows them to get more done in shorter time frames.

Bottom line

U.S. Financial Life has not had to purchase new hardware, incur additional maintenance expenses, or increase training even though the company has quadrupled in size since purchasing the equipment in 1999.

Six years ago, U.S. Financial Life had 45 computers on one hub and one PC/phone support specialist. Today, the company has 180 PCs on four hubs via T1 Internet access and one satellite location. Despite this growth in technology, the company still employs only one support person. Enabling wireless connectivity for their staff has spiked programmer productivity by offering the staff an option to flex their workday. And the savings that U.S. Financial Life has realized on overhead has allowed them to easily grow their business and realize their goals.

Because of the ongoing relationship and savings garnered using only one provider, the company will turn over their DNS service to Sprint this year. Erik Simmons and U.S. Financial Life look forward to working together along the way. "Sprint already knows how we do business, and I know how they do business. They are the first call I would ever make," he says.

Why Sprint?

After more than 100 years, Sprint remains a company you can count on. We deliver integrated communication—wireless and wireline services for voice and data—managed as one seamless network with the focus on your business. Because of our unique combination of network assets, Sprint offers real value like end-to-end accountability, responsive service, and guaranteed connectivity. By providing useful innovations with technology that's here today, Sprint can prove it will benefit your company now and in the future.

"I don't consider Sprint a vendor – I consider them one of the team. Vendor services tend not to go beyond the scope of immediate needs. Sprint understood our structure and the quirks that require special solutions. And there's a lot to be said for one-stop shopping!"

— Erik Simmons, Vice President of Operations, U.S. Financial Life

For more information, contact your Sprint Sales Representative.

