

Imperial College London cuts landline to mobile call costs in half thanks to Obsidian

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**Stuart Kerr - Telephone Services Manager,
Imperial College London**

Founded in 1907, Imperial College London is a science-based educational institution with a strong reputation for excellence in teaching and research. It is consistently rated amongst the world's best universities and has faculties of Engineering, Medicine and Natural Sciences, as well as a Business School. The total intake in any academic year averages at around 13,000 students from more than 150 different countries, who have over 200 different courses available to them.

The challenge

With 13,000 students, spread across six separate sites and supported by over 8,000 staff members, high quality yet cost-effective communication is of course an essential requirement. The University needs to work within strict budgets, and so any opportunity to find a better way to operate needs to be investigated. Telephone Services Manager Stuart Kerr explains further:

Key features

- ▣ Predicted savings of £67,500 over two years
- ▣ Fully-managed solution with no initial outlay
- ▣ Initial contract recently renewed
- ▣ A 50%+ reduction in landline to mobile call costs
- ▣ Free SMS broadcast messaging

“I was approached by Obsidian in early 2008, with details of their cost saving services for calling mobiles from landlines. I knew the company anyway from my previous role, and they had always kept in touch to keep me up to date with their latest pricing. When I discovered that the Obsidian solution could reduce my rate for landline to mobile calls to below 4p a minute, I knew it was time to talk to them.”

After a meeting to discuss Imperial College London's individual requirements, Obsidian recommended their GSM Gateway solution. This provides the ability to reduce ICL's landline telecoms bills significantly, by converting expensive 'landline to mobile' calls into far cheaper 'mobile to mobile' calls. On average, a call from a landline to a mobile is at least twice and sometimes three times as expensive as calling from another mobile, so with a GSM Gateway in place, ICL would be able to achieve some serious savings.

The solution

Because all six of Imperial College London's sites are networked, all calls go through the University's main PBX - which means that landline to mobile calls from the 6,400 staff at the main campus, and a further 1,600 staff at the other five sites, can all be routed via the Gateway.

To accommodate this volume of traffic, Obsidian installed a 16-port GSM Gateway with enough SIM cards to support 59,500 minutes a month. The initial contract was for 24 months from February 2008 and the projected saving over the term of the contract was £67,500. Stuart continues:

"Having looked at our phone bills to see how much we were spending on these types of calls, Obsidian came up with the best cost saving solution for us, in terms of number of ports, minutes and SIMs. They also did a site survey to ensure that our comms room could support the additional equipment. It was all very simple and very straightforward.

But it's not just about the cost savings, it's all about the human interface. I like the way that Obsidian do business, you have a normal conversation with them and they are not always trying to sell you something. They understand my business and the way I work - in fact, out of all my suppliers, I prefer dealing with Obsidian."

The future

Obsidian has recently renewed Imperial College London's contract for a further two years, renegotiated at an even better rate - and with this in place ICL is also able to benefit from some valuable additional functionality. The new contract includes bundled SMS messages as well as the minutes, which will enable Stuart to send broadcast SMS messages free of charge. He concludes:

"Not only were we able to get an even better rate per minute with the new contract, we're also getting extra features for free. It's a real bonus. The SMS messaging will be very useful, for example enabling our ICT service desk to send messages to all staff mobiles if we have any IT issues which people need to be informed about.

Obsidian are very good at telling us about new technology which might help us. I'm involved with the Association of University Administrators forum and if other Telecoms Managers have a question about GSM Gateways I always advise them accordingly and tell them about Obsidian. They are a very good company to deal with and I often recommend them to other Higher Education institutions."

**If you would like to find out more,
or to arrange a free site survey,
please call 0203 023 7999,
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