

AIRCRAFT INSTRUMENTATION LEADER ENABLES RESPONSIVE, CUSTOMER-CENTRIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH DIGITALLY POWERED TELEPHONY



EXPERTLY MANAGED TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION HELPS PEOPLE CONNECT WITH IMMEDIACY AND EFFICIENCY

In a collaboration with Sikich, [Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics](#) updated its communications technology with an integrated, software-based solution in the cloud. Today, employees enjoy unrestricted flexibility in how and where they make and take calls, send and respond to messages, and manage their availability. No longer needing to be on hold or wait for a response, customers and business partners can almost every time they call connect immediately with somebody who can help them.

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Mike Sanders,
Director of Information Technology

UPLEVELING COMMUNICATIONS AS PART OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Founded in Wichita, Kansas, in 1964, Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics manufactures, overhauls, and repairs aircraft instruments, avionics, and advanced power solutions for the global aerospace industry. The company's True Blue Power division was established in 2010 and specializes in the design and manufacturing of cutting-edge certified electrical power systems and lithium-ion batteries.

The fixed-base operators, government agencies, instruments and avionics shops, original equipment manufacturers, flight schools, and other customers who rely on Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics expect the communications with their sales, support, and other contacts in the organization to be of the same outstanding quality as its products. Mike Sanders, Director of Information Technology at Mid-Continent, says, "Many times, for example, when instruments are down, customers need an immediate resolution. Getting to the right person, whether that's somebody who can help them in sales or with a product replacement, is an urgency we wanted to address. In our industry, innovation and excellence are key to serving and retaining customers."



DIGITAL CLOUD TOOLS REPLACE ONSITE LEGACY HARDWARE

An older private branch exchange (PBX) system facilitated Mid-Continent's telephony. It was no longer possible to update the hardware or find parts if it needed repair. Mid-Continent had been a Sikich client for many years and enlisted the consultancy to assist with the modernization of its voice communications and conferencing technology. In recent times, Sikich had [helped Mid-Continent](#) deploy Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain and transition to Microsoft 365, which includes [Teams](#). The company already used Teams for meetings, chatting, and file sharing, but had not yet explored extending its use of Teams to replace conventional telephony with voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology.

In discussions between Mid-Continent and Sikich it turned out that Teams augmented with solutions optimized for Teams by Microsoft Gold Certified Partner [Landis Technologies](#) would best enable the advanced communications Mid-Continent looked for. Sikich configured Teams and integrated it with Landis's Microsoft Teams Contact Center and Microsoft Teams Attendant Console. "The Sikich lead technician on our team was a phenomenal resource in terms of knowledge and understanding of the Teams environment as well as his ability to provide several more cutting-edge capabilities that aren't out-of-the-box functionality," says Sanders.



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DESIGNING COMMUNICATIONS TO SERVE EVERYBODY IN THE COMPANY

Going live with the new Teams and Landis communications platform and watching employees begin using it for VoIP calling was an easy transition following a fast deployment. The Mid-Continent IT team assumed management of the technology without needing to add staff with special expertise.

When Mid-Continent implemented Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain, the company encouraged and involved the entire workforce in exploring, testing, and providing feedback on the new ERP system long before it went live with it. Similarly, Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics prepared employees for a cultural and technical change in communications months before the go-live date. Team members could try out and make their selections from a variety of different headsets to use for Teams telephony, and they also had the flexibility to change their mind and make a different request. Sanders says, "We made people feel part of the process and gave them a choice in the matter, so the acceptance for the new communications technology was very high."

Mid-Continent decided to step away from traditional desk phones and transition to software-enabled telephony exclusively, allowing everybody in the organization to take full advantage of Teams capabilities. "Had we replaced employees' existing desk phones with Teams models, we would not have delivered as much of a benefit to them," Sanders says. "Feedback tells us that people like the convenience of Teams and find it easy to answer and initiate calls."

THE FLEXIBILITY TO CONNECT ANYTIME, FROM ANY LOCATION

Both IT and the user community found that the integrated Teams and Landis solution easily accommodated the complete range of communication preferences and management practices at Mid-Continent. "The flexibility is probably the greatest benefit we've seen in terms of being able to manage communications," notes Sanders. IT team members add phone numbers or users, reassign phone numbers, configure user settings, and perform other administrative tasks through a software interface from any device or location, without ever needing to use dedicated hardware or even a physical telephone. "Users have more communications options to support them," Sanders explains. "They can take calls through their computer or the Teams mobile app. They decide how and when they are available to answer calls."

Mid-Continent's international account representatives, who are almost always traveling, can make calls on their laptops in addition to their mobile phones. "Our global sales team members feel much more connected to the office now, because they don't need to have calls forwarded, voicemails transcribed, or messages sent to them," Sanders explains. "They take calls as they need to, wherever they are. If they set their status to unavailable, they can easily find missed calls or voicemails when they're back in Teams. Communications have become very flexible and transparent for them."



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EASIER CONNECTIONS FOR EXTERNAL CALLERS

Previously, operators received incoming calls and routed them to the person a caller asked for. If that individual was not available, the caller could record a voicemail, hang up, or return to the operator and ask to leave a message or try to page the person. In the Teams and Landis environment, it's much easier for callers to reach their intended contact or another team member who can assist them. "Callers hear an automated message and can choose the best path to reach the group or team that can help them," describes Sanders.

MANY MORE WAYS TO ENABLE CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

Some traditional communications functions at Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics have changed. Callers no longer need to request the operator to page a person or take a message. In Teams, it's easy to route calls automatically to a colleague or a group of people to increase the likelihood of callers being able to still make an effective connection even when their initial contact is not available. "Call recipients automatically receive calls on their phones or computers, wherever they are and depending on their preferences," Sanders says. "If they are not available and callers leave a voicemail, it's immediately transcribed and available to the respondent, or a designated colleague or even an entire team, depending on users' configurations. They see who called for which reason and decide on the best response in the moment."

Teams offers a variety of options for configuring forwarding, for example, according to people's skills or following a set list. "Customers are getting a much faster response without having to be on hold," Sanders comments. "Ninety-nine percent of the time someone is available to speak with them, and of course these employees don't need to be at a certain location to pick up a call—they can be anywhere."



COST ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MODERNIZATION

Companies have to evaluate whether to modernize their voice communications with a new version of traditional PBX systems, transition entirely to Teams, or adopt an integrated Teams and Landis solution like Mid-Continent did. Sanders recommends researching all available options, the related expenses, and the roadmaps that lay out a solution's directions and enhancements. "Scrutinize the more traditional systems and document the substantial costs associated with these on-premises solutions," he advises. "We found that VoIP telephony is more flexible and can deliver a greater set of benefits for a more reasonable investment. When organizations already use other Microsoft solutions such as Dynamics 365 or SharePoint, they also may find that software licensing options can be greatly in their favor."



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FROM TRADITION TO PURPOSE-DRIVEN COMMUNICATIONS

At Mid-Continent Instruments and Avionics, the culture of communications continues to evolve as callers and employees become used to the flexibility and responsiveness that become possible when people are not tied to a specific location or device. The company is still refining best practices and exploring ways to improve communications with its digital telephony and conferencing tools, often based on feedback from customers and others calling in. Seemingly minor adjustments like adjusting the number of seconds a call rings at its destination before being rerouted when the respondent is not available, can make a real difference in the quality of callers' experience. The automatic internal routing of sales calls and the detailed, practical options users can provide in their outgoing messages also help set the right tone for a productive conversation.



“Even when you’re in a meeting, you can quickly respond to somebody’s voicemail with a chat,” Sanders comments. “The elasticity of our digital communication platform vastly expands the opportunities for effective, timely communications.” With these expanded capabilities, expectations and mind sets regarding telephony and conferencing can shed outdated notions. Sanders points out, “People take many traditional communications barriers for granted, but they are neither necessary nor helpful. You don’t need to continue with whatever you’ve always done in a certain way, because you have a much greater range of flexible functionality with Teams telephony.”

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