

CASE STUDY

echo Marketing Solutions

support and servicing of telecommunications

Service Makes the Difference in Echo Marketing's Tele-Fundraising Business

Echo Marketing Solutions, Inc., located in Toronto, is a progressive, rapidly growing direct marketing firm whose objective is to transform the way fundraising is done in North America. Echo works with Not-For-Profit (NFP) organizations across North America to generate large streams of recurring net revenue through the acquisition, retention and cultivation of monthly giving and major/planned giving programs. It accomplishes this through strategic leadership, donor research, database analysis and tele-fundraising.

Echo's tele-fundraising services involve outbound, telephone-based donor contacting and fundraising for NFPs throughout Canada and the United States. Eighty five to ninety percent of Echo's fundraising for its NFP clients is tied directly to telecommunicating.

"Contacting donors and performing fundraising is not just a quick phone call and a registered "hit," explained Dave Van Auken, Director of Operations for Echo. "We focus on very high quality calls to donors and prospects. We're not centered so much on the number of "hits" as we are on the quality of the telephone experience that the donor has with us. We also use telephony to communicate news about the NSP to their donor bases."

Attention to relationship "care" makes the average Echo call 3 1/2-5 minutes long. Virtually all of the telefundraising occurs through outbound calling from some 55 Echo Telefundraising Specialists, and the company has experienced phenomenal success, projecting continued sizable growth of its Telefundraising Center over the next two years.

The Technology Behind the Operation

Echo supports its telecommunications with a DSI Internet

connection and six T1 Primary Rate Interfaces (PRI's) for voice. Its telephony platform is furnished by Interactive Intelligence, which provides IP telephony and call center systems. The Interactive Intelligence system Echo Marketing uses includes a SQL server that is a dedicated dialer and a second SQL server that runs Echo's telephony data processing. Echo agents use Windows-based workstations. The company operates on a Cisco-driven 100baseT network, which hosts redundant internal operational servers and two terabyte encrypted long term storage servers. "The system has been in operation for 3 1/2 years," said Van Auken. "We use it for all of our outbound telephony activities in the Telefundraising Center."

Challenge

To support and service telecommunications without having to spend the time and money to hire and train internal support staff.

Solution

Use KRP Communications as a telecommunications support partner to save valuable lost money through increased uptime and faster resolution of issues.

Backing the Operation with Quality Service and Support

As Echo's Director of Operations, Dave Van Auken quickly recognized that a telephony platform is only as good as the service and support that stand behind it-and that excellence in both is required when telecommunications is such an integral element of Echo's core business.

"We made the move to KRP because we were very impressed with KRP's expertise, dedication and candor."

Fifty-five of Echo's 80 employees are Telefundraisers. "We only have a three-person team in corporate IS supporting the entire telecommunications operation, and one of those is the IS Manager," said Van Auken. "Our strategic direction for Echo's IS Department is not to grow a large internal support staff. We want to keep our IS staff lean, and yet fully capable in supporting our internal business processes."

Van Auken said that part of this strategic direction was to not get caught up in the details of maintaining special expertise areas like telephony. Instead, IS resources were needed for developing innovative support for key company strategic initiatives. The only way to accomplish this was to find a strong telecommunications services provider that would be a value-added business partner.

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"The support and ongoing servicing of our telecommunications was a major area of concern for us," said Van Auken. "We had an outside telecommunications service provider for several years, but we found that the service provider wasn't always responsive, that communications were not always direct, that problems were not being resolved, and that as a consequence, we were having to dedicate large amounts of internal staff time to try to learn the telephony system and support the Telefundraising Center. Some of our Telefundraising Center calls were taking as long as 1 1/2 minutes to connect to a specialist. All of these problems that could not be expediently resolved were literally costing us hundreds of thousands of dollarswhich ultimately is not in line with our focus on effective and efficient stewardship of our clients' fundraising dollars--and we knew we would never get to the critical internal business processes that we needed IS to be working on."

"From a price point perspective, the value KRP delivers is phenomenal... the service is priceless"

Dave Van Auken. "First, we wanted transparency of problems and problem resolution for our Telefundraising Center, which could not afford downtime or call delays. Second, we wanted an SLA-level commitment from our telecommunications partner, along with candor and direct communications in our working relationship, and a feeling that we were partners in this together. Third, we recognized that IS was never going to deliver results to the company as a department if they were having to reroute our efforts to telecommunications problem resolution....From a price point perspective, the value KRP delivers is phenomenal. From the standpoints of peace of mind and the value you place on having someone who will always be "right there" with both expertise and performance, the service is priceless."

To solve the issue, Echo went to the open market to find a new telecommunications support partner. "We had heard about KRP Communications, and KRP was one of the organizations we talked to," said Van Auken. "They immediately responded to our situation. We made the move to KRP because we were very impressed with KRP's expertise, dedication and candor. We have now been with KRP nearly two years. They are always responsive to our issues, and they are very quick to get back to us with information and resolutions. As a former IS manager, I also appreciate the fact that they are upfront and candid in our dialogues. For example, if we are considering a certain telecommunications deployment, KRP will tell us right away if it will or will not work--and why, providing the information required for Echo to make an educated decision. Whether it is for a telecommunications upgrade or a problem fix, KRP lays out a plan, communicates with us upfront--and the entire process is resolved in a timely fashion and is completely transparent to our Telefundraising Specialists and to our end business."

The Critical Edge of Service

When effective telecommunications is integral to the core business, having the right combination of expertise, support and service in place can make a huge difference in customer satisfaction and the corporate bottom line.

"We recognized the importance of a strong telecommunications service partner, and we had several goals that we had defined and that we now have achieved as a business," said

Benefits

- Avoid telecommunications downtime related to inexperienced internal support staff.
- Allow IS to focus on business services and deliver quality results rather than being routed into telecommunications issues.
- World-class support through an SLA-level commitment from KRP Communications.



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KRP Communications

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