IdyllwildARTS
Academy • Summer Program

Reliability and Cost Savings Take Center Stage at Idyllwild Arts Academy Thanks to Global CTI

This popular residential high school needed a reliable, feature-rich communications system to help ensure safety in its remote location, and keep the students' focus on creativity and learning.

Take 265 highly creative students from more than 30 regions around the world, and put them together in a spectacular mountain setting with a renowned arts community. That's campus life at Idyllwild Arts Academy, a private residential high school located in the San Bernardino National Forest, on the western slopes of California's San Jacinto Mountains.

Idyllwild Arts Academy offers a disciplined college preparatory program for grades 9-12 and post-graduates, together with world-class training in creative writing, dance, film and video, interdisciplinary arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. The picturesque campus covers more than 207 acres of forest, and houses about 70 buildings, including classrooms, studios, theaters, offices, labs, dorm rooms and dining halls. It's also fairly remote—more than two hours by car from the urban neighborhoods of Los Angeles and San Diego—which means that reliable and effective communications are vital for students, parents and staff. As the school's previous phone system reached its end of life and became increasingly expensive to run and maintain, IT director, Buck Little, decided to investigate options in IP telephony. Experience told him that in this rural setting, the IP network was more reliable than the aging phone wiring, and that the advanced communications capabilities available with an IP-based system, would help improve efficiency and safety at the school.

"Since we're in an area that is susceptible to earthquakes, fires and even mudslides, we take emergency preparedness very seriously, and communications is a key part of that," Mr Little said. "Not only was it becoming increasingly difficult to get parts for our old phone system, but the system simply didn't offer the kinds of 911 and campus-friendly features, such as four-digit dialing and automated call distribution, that we need to stay connected across campus."

Challenge:
Located in a remote forest setting, Idyllwild Arts Academy was throwing good money after bad trying to keep its aging phone system alive. To ensure effective communications between parents, teachers, students and staff, the school needed a highly available, modern IP telephony system.

Solution:
The Idyllwild Arts Academy chose the ShoreTel Unified Communications (UC) system, deploying ShoreTel throughout its 70-building campus, almost 70 IP phones and more than 400 analog phones for student dormitories.

Benefits:
- Estimated savings of approximately 75 percent over the previous Fujitsu system.
- Customized applications to control student phone use and ensure effective emergency response in this natural disaster-prone area.
- Ease of management, freeing valuable resources and enabling the IT staff to quickly respond to changing requirements.
- Productivity enhancing features that help streamline communications and ensure students stay connected to parents and teachers.

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**Global CTI
Case Study:
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ShoreTel Selected From a Cast of Leading Vendors

As part of the decision-making process, Mr Little requested proposals from Avaya, 3Com, and Cisco. When Global CTI introduced him to the ShoreTel solution, he was impressed with its pure IP-based architecture and ease of management, and included the ShoreTel UC system in his evaluation.

"We're an IT department of two people, so the fact that the ShoreTel UC system did not require special skills or certifications for performing routine tasks was very attractive," Mr Little explained. "We wanted to be able to manage the system ourselves, but the others we looked at seemed too complex. Support and service capabilities also were important considerations—we need fast and responsive service, and felt confident that Global CTI and ShoreTel would be there when we need them." After carefully analyzing ShoreTel's low cost of ownership, Idyllwild's CFO supported Mr Little's recommendation to purchase a ShoreTel UC system, and the president and school board approved.

> **"Everyone has found the ShoreTel system easy to use because it adapts to the way we work, not the other way round."**
>
> **Buck Little**
> IT Director,
> Idyllwild Arts Academy

"Some members of our staff were a little nervous about installing a whole new phone system, but the entire project went extremely smoothly," Mr Little said. "Global CTI ran training classes and did such a thorough job that all our end-users are now raving about how easy it is to use."

Custom Applications Spotlight Safety and Discipline

At Idyllwild's request, the ShoreTel Professional Services team designed a custom application that enables the school to turn off the students' dorm room phones at predefined times. The previous system had electronic switches that actually disconnected the phones so that they were completely out of service during these hours and could not be used in the event of an emergency. The ShoreTel application provides a flexible time that prevents a phone from being shut off in the middle of a phone call, and streams a recording to alert students that the phones will be turned off.

"ShoreTel Professional Services delivered a solution that means calls can be placed to certain numbers, such as 911 in the event of an emergency, but are not available for general use during restricted hours," Mr Little said. "This helps reduce late night distractions in the dorm rooms, while still ensuring everyone's safety."

In addition to this custom application, Idyllwild also deployed the ShoreTel E911 Integration Application that allows first responders and other allocated emergency and security personnel to see exactly where on campus the 911 call is coming from. "This application gives us the peace of mind that in the event of an emergency, we can get the right people to the right place as quickly as possible, and respond swiftly and effectively," Mr Little said.

Idyllwild also is using the ShoreTel Paging Extensions application, which allows the headmaster to instantly broadcast security announcements to key administrative staff by dialing an extension. The page is heard through the speakers on the ShorePhone IP Telephones.

Global CTI Case Study: Idyllwild ARTS

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The Show Must Go on With ShoreTel Reliability

"I haven't had to worry about the reliability of the ShoreTel UC system—it just works, and the number of help-desk calls has virtually disappeared." Management simplicity provides Mr Little with the peace of mind that his team can perform moves, adds and changes without inadvertently disrupting the system. "My assistant was spending more than two thirds of his time on repairs and issues with the old system," Mr Little said. "Now it's only the old analog wiring that takes up about 25 percent of him time. If he needs to make moves, adds and changes, he can do so quickly, and without having to rely on an outside vendor."

Huge Cost Savings Take Center Stage

As a direct result of ShoreTel's ease of management, Idyllwild is now realizing significant cost savings after paying a premium for priority service with their previous vendor—almost 75 percent less in fact. "We were paying $6,700 every quarter for priority service with the old system," Mr Little said. "Now we're paying about $5,000 a year for a system that is so much richer in features and capabilities."

Since the school is located in forest at an elevation of 5,000 feet, cell phone coverage is not available. However, Mr Little has implemented WiFi through the school's network, and uses his iPhone to access voicemail while he's mobile around campus. This mobility feature is important for other staff, too, and helps support campus safety.

Global CTI Steals the Limelight

Mr Little said. "Everyone has found the ShoreTel system easy to use because it adapts to the way we work, not the other way round. Without doubt, Global CTI's implementation of ShoreTel was absolutely the right decision. We wanted a solid basic phone system, but got so much more with Global CTI—ShoreTel has been the star of the show."

As technology evolves, it becomes more and more integrated with our daily lives, be it at home or work. Leveraging a partner you can trust to help navigate the quickly changing landscape of new technology can help you do your job better. Global CTI is the down-to-earth tech team that makes complex IT simple to make your business better, period.