



Distribution & Logistics

▶ Nike Gears Up with Wireless Voice Communications

▶ Daily Use

- Handsets are shared between shifts and personalized by having more than one extension and more than one voice mailbox assigned to a single wireless handset
- Reliable coverage even through thick concrete warehouse walls and heavy steel conveyor equipment

▶ Solution

- Polycom® SpectraLink® 8000 Wireless Telephones

▶ Results and Benefits

- Seamless integration to Nike's Nortel Meridian 81C PBX keeping the continuity in voice messaging, dialing by extension, and other telephone features key
- Cost savings realized by eliminating cell phones and pagers
- Leverages the company's existing Wi-Fi network that also supports handheld scanners and other mobile data applications

Background

Employees at Nike's Memphis, Tenn. distribution center are used to wearing out their sneakers. Hectic loading, shipping, and inventory upkeep in the more than one million-square-foot facility means that employees are always on the move.

Today, employees at the six-building Nike facility match their fast legwork with voice communications on their Polycom® SpectraLink 8000 Wireless Telephones, exponentially increasing worksite efficiency. Additionally, Nike's new SpectraLink Wireless Telephones operate on the company's existing Wi-Fi network, eliminating an investment in a separate network infrastructure. Given Nike's newfound advantages, its SpectraLink Wireless Telephones give it an ROI that's hard to beat.

However, Nike's voice communications weren't always that ideal. Previously, the distribution center relied on an overhead paging system to alert employees in the warehouse to calls. Employees, in turn, responded by looking for an available telephone at a designated workstation, using personal cell phones, or walking to the administration building. The problem was that communications were unreliable and delayed. Since the warehouse telephones were restricted to inbound calls only, employees averaged a seven-minute walk from the warehouses to the administration building each time they received a page or needed to make an outside call.

Compounding the problem was the lack of continuity in the distribution center's voice communications, which consisted of using a combination of pagers, cellular telephones, and fixed telephones, and even asking co-workers to relay messages.

Managers had a difficult time locating employees and few managers knew for certain which mode of communication an employee best responded to. For instance, managers had no guarantee on which days employees carried their personal cellular telephones, nor were they certain that messages were checked throughout the day. As a result, managers often resorted to calling various communications devices, paging employees, and leaving a back up message on cell phones.

"We are just thrilled with the system's convenience. Employees from various departments are constantly in touch with one another. The amount of time and effort we are saving with SpectraLink Wireless Telephones is amazing."

Carol McSparrin, Nike senior telecommunications technician

“Employees love these phones. They love the accessories. I keep getting requests for all types of phone accessories. While they love the frills, the bottom line is we’re getting the job done faster.”

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Taking the Leap

When the Nike distribution center piloted the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones in late 2002, mostly the IT staff used them, along with a few managers. Carol McSparrin, Nike senior telecommunications technician, found the system easy to use and extremely convenient.

“Employees are able to communicate with one another so much more quickly,” McSparrin says. “That’s the benefit we were looking for all along. Now, employees don’t need to have cell phones and pagers, so we do see a cost benefit. Plus, we are using the same Wi-Fi network we have in place for our handheld scanners and other mobile data applications. But most importantly, we have our employees working more efficiently.”

In April 2003, the second group adopted SpectraLink Wireless Telephones, significantly changing voice communications. Now, administrative assistants and maintenance personnel also use the handsets.

SpectraLink Wireless Telephones Gain Traction

In planning to make the distribution center more efficient, Nike considered expanding cellular telephone use, which some employees had already adopted in order to stay in touch. But the thick concrete warehouse walls and heavy steel conveyor equipment meant cellular coverage was hit or miss. The cost of airtime minutes also made the idea of cellular telephones cost prohibitive—not to mention impractical. If employees used cellular phones for the distribution center, Nike had no continuity in voice messaging, dialing by extension, and other features key to an internal communications system.

“We are just thrilled with the system’s convenience,” McSparrin says. “Employees from various departments are constantly in touch with one another. The amount of time and effort we are saving with SpectraLink Wireless Telephones is amazing.”

From an installation perspective, the system integrated seamlessly, McSparrin says.

“We’re using our same Nortel Meridian 81C PBX so the integration was incredibly smooth, with no glitches whatsoever,” McSparrin says. “And the last batch of handsets we found so simple that we were able to install them ourselves.”

In addition to working with the Nortel PBX, the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones also integrate with the distribution center’s Psion Teklogix Wi-Fi access points.

An Enthusiastic Thumbs Up

Feedback from employees, McSparrin says, has been excellent. Already, management has received employee requests for more handsets. The Nike distribution center has worked out schedules for the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones so that people from different shifts can share them, and personalize them by having more than one extension and more than one voice mailbox assigned to a single wireless handset.

“Employees love these phones. They carry them on their belt clips, with the shoulder strap, in their pockets, wherever,” McSparrin says. “They love the accessories. I keep getting requests for all types of phone accessories. While they love the frills, the bottom line is we’re getting the job done faster.”

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