

How Three Savvy Small Businesses Are Growing and Improving Productivity with Cloud Communications

With today's fast-paced, competitive environment, business leaders know that utilising technology efficiently is the key to success. Applying technology effectively is even more important for small businesses that are competing with the big guys and require services that project an image as big as their ambitions.

Critical to the success of any business is an outstanding communications system. Not only must it be reliable, but also easy to use and cost-effective. That's why more and more businesses are turning to cloud-based unified communications.

8x8 has worked with over 40,000 organisations of all sizes. Let's look at three examples of savvy, forward-thinking companies that are growing their businesses and improving challenges with 8x8 unified communications.





Customer: Beamalife Financial Services

Industry: Financial services and insurance

Location:
Piscataway, New Jersey

Website:
www.beamalifeinsurance.com

8x8 Products: Virtual Office

Extensions: 9

Favorite 8x8 Feature:

- Programmable ring groups
- Mobile app
- All-in-one solution

Financial Services Company Switches to 8x8 to Make Customer Service a Priority

Beamalife

In 2007 when Neil Jesani founded BeamaLife, an online life insurance and financial planning firm, he did not intend to become an expert in voice over IP (VoIP) phone systems. But as a hands-on CEO with 30 employees in his Piscataway, New Jersey, office, he has learned the ins and outs of various VoIP solutions while running BeamaLife's online business.

Challenge:

In December 2011, just as he was about to move into new offices, Jesani's Internet provider informed him at the last minute that his new office would not have high-speed Internet access for four to six weeks. To keep BeamaLife going, Jesani quickly arranged for low-bandwidth Internet to be installed. The stop-gap measure had just one major flaw: BeamaLife's existing VoIP softphones would not function at low bandwidth.

To solve his phone problem, Jesani decided to swap out his existing VoIP system for a different one. Initially, it looked as though he had made the right decision. But once his employees settled into their new office, problems emerged that made Jesani question his selection. Features did not work properly, calls were being dropped, the new phone system crashed a number of times, and it turned out the system was not truly cloud-based. "Obviously no phone system is perfect," says Jesani, "but we had three or four outages just in the first few months of service. That made me question our provider's long-term reliability."

Solution:

Jesani started looking for another replacement system and contacted 8x8. While 8x8's baseline pricing was slightly lower than the cost of his current system, it was the advanced business features included with the "Pro" version of 8x8's solution that finally sold him.

Results:

Switching to 8x8 has improved collaboration among employees. "The chatting and status update features are great," says Jesani. "Now we can easily see when someone's available and when they're busy, which helps my people work together much more productively." Jesani is also a fan of 8x8's Virtual Office Meetings solution. "8x8 Virtual Office makes it so easy to set up and manage online meetings," he says.

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The flexibility of 8x8's cloud VoIP solution has enabled Jesani to customise some standard features for his business as well. "We use two auto attendants: one for our 800 numbers and one for our main office line. There are fewer prompts and options for our 800 numbers so we can keep those calls short. Our main line auto attendant has a complete menu of options for callers to route themselves."

Because 8x8's pricing is so cost-effective, Jesani uses 50–60 toll-free numbers in the U.S. to track how effective his advertising and website links are. "We advertise all over," he explains, "so if we're running ads on both CNN and CNBC, we use a different toll-free number for each network. I even use different toll-free numbers on different parts of the BeamALife website. That way, we can track where our advertising leads come from, and make informed decisions about where to invest our advertising dollars."

Looking back on his experience with 8x8, Jesani is confident that this time he made the right decision. "We set up our 8x8 system in about a week, and ran it side-by-side with our existing phone system," he says. "We waited for a consensus to develop on which one to use, and 8x8 was clearly the winner. But perhaps more importantly, Jesani has confidence in 8x8's cloud VoIP solution itself. "Unlike our previous provider's system, 8x8's solution is truly cloud based," he explains. "We don't have to download any software or worry about being too far from our phones. With 8x8, we can use our phones anywhere."

8x8's reliability makes Jesani feel confident about the future as well. "We made the right decision in choosing 8x8. It's an investment that not only keeps our customers connected to us, but enhances our ability to serve them."



Customer: Silverado Stages

Industry: Charter bus service

Locations:

- San Luis Obispo (headquarters)
- Sacramento
- Los Angeles
- Santa Barbara
- San Francisco
- Bakersfield

8x8 Products: Virtual Office

Extensions: 66

Favorite 8x8 Features: Self-service system administration

Primary Reason Chose 8x8:

Flexibility makes 8x8 the most cost-effective solution for their business

Website: www.silveradostages.com

Previous System: Multiple systems including Toshiba and three different service providers

Bus Charter Company Consolidates Multiple Systems, Saving Money and Improving Operations

Silverado Stages

Silverado Stages began providing charter bus service out of its main office in San Luis Obispo, California, almost 30 years ago. Today the company has six locations throughout the state, and is the largest privately owned motor coach company in California. With its safe, efficient and modern fleet of passenger vehicles, Silverado Stages provides a range of services, including charters; local and multi-state over-the-road tours; scheduled fixed routes; airport shuttles; and ADA-compliant transportation. Going the extra mile for customers has made Silverado Stages one of the most successful charter bus services in the western U.S.

Challenge:

When tech-savvy accountant Alex Garcia first came on board, he never imagined that he'd also be put in charge of the company's phone system. But Silverado Stages needed his technical skills as much as his accounting expertise, so Garcia agreed to take on both roles. Disparate phone services from different providers created a complex and unreliable system that impeded the company's expansion plans. As Garcia struggled to add users and locations for the rapidly growing company, he soon realized that the Toshiba system used by the San Luis Obispo and Sacramento offices was making his IT job much harder than it had to be.

"Even if we were just moving someone to a new cube, it was a very involved process," he recalls. "A technician had to come on site to switch out the lines." Another major issue was downtime. Because the two company offices shared a phone system, if there was an outage in San Luis Obispo, the Sacramento office would go down, too. Meanwhile, the company's other satellite offices were using three different phone systems with three different service providers.

Solution:

When the Toshiba system suddenly went down and stayed down for several days, Garcia accelerated his search for a replacement. "I started looking into hosted VoIP service, because I knew we had to get all of our locations onto one system," says Garcia. "We checked out a number of hosted VoIP solutions, but 8x8's flexibility won out. They let us buy exactly the services we needed instead of forcing us to pay extra for things we don't want. None of the other vendors were as flexible as 8x8."

In October 2014, Silverado Stages signed a service contract with 8x8. Over the next two-and-a-half months, the company ported more than 30 phone numbers from three different service providers to the 8x8 system, a very complex process that 8x8 helped manage.



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Results:

Silverado Stages' locations and services are now all unified on the 8x8 platform. The company no longer pays multiple bills to multiple providers for phone service, meetings, music on hold and virtual numbers—8x8's cloud solution does it all. And not only is this consolidation much more convenient, it's saving the company at least \$15K a year!

A key example is metered service for the company's receptionist. As Silverado Stages Digital Marketing Manager Cory Medigovich explains, the receptionist answers a large volume of inbound calls but makes almost no outbound calls. Therefore, it doesn't make sense for the company to pay for unlimited inbound and outbound calling on her line. Metered service is much more cost-effective—yet only 8x8 offers this kind of flexible pricing.

Consolidation has also greatly improved communication within and between offices. Employees now dial a three-digit extension to reach anyone in the company. And 8x8's virtual meeting features make employees in different offices "feel like they're all in the same room together," according to Medigovich.

Because Garcia is a self-described "control freak," 8x8's web-based administration portal is very important to him. Garcia can log in from anywhere and make whatever changes he wants to the phone system, particularly the auto attendant. "Our old system couldn't be reconfigured without a technician, so I felt helpless when we needed to change our call routing," says Garcia. "8x8 gives me control. Now I can write scripts and record prompts myself, without depending on anyone. Instead of weeks, updates only take an hour."

Medigovich adds that "8x8's technical support team was immensely helpful while we were piloting the system. They understood Alex's time constraints—he's also got accounting work to do—so they helped him get up to speed quickly."

In 2015, Silverado Stages received the United Motorcoach Association (UMA) Vision Award, which honors companies that are instrumental in setting standards that advance the motorcoach industry."

We were recognised for pushing boundaries by using advanced technology to improve our service," says Medigovich. "The award has given us a bright outlook for the future: we knew we were the best, and now the whole industry knows." According to Garcia and Medigovich, 8x8 plays an important role in keeping the company on the leading edge.



Customer: MatrixOneSource

Industry: Business process outsourcing

Location: Jacksonville (headquarters), Miami, Pensacola, and Tampa, Florida

Website: www.matrixonesource.com

8x8 Products: Virtual Office and Virtual Contact Centre

Solution: Virtual Office; 74 extensions; 10 contact centre seats

Favorite 8x8 Features:

- Service desk integration
- Find me, Follow me
- Mobile app

Time to Deploy: 2-3 weeks

Connectivity type: Comcast high-speed broadband

Vendor Replaced: Inter-Tel

8x8's Integrated Unified Communications and Contact Centre Solution Delivers High-Touch Customer Service

MatrixOneSource

MatrixOneSource's business philosophy is simple: everything is geared toward a great customer experience. Founded in 1999 and based in Jacksonville, Florida, the company started out as—and continues to be—a BPO service provider focused on human resources, payroll processing, and related employment services. After experiencing triple-digit growth, MatrixOneSource launched a managed service provider (MSP) group that delivers the same outstanding customer experience as its BPO division, but focused on infrastructure technology support. What distinguishes MatrixOneSource is the utilisation of tools and technologies to help clients gain efficiencies, reduce costs and drive their businesses forward.

Challenge:

MatrixOneSource tried to manage its rapid growth by installing various PBX hardware systems in its Jacksonville, Miami, Pensacola and Tampa, Florida, offices. Maintaining these disparate systems soon became "an arduous task" explains MatrixOneSource CIO Eric Tewey.

"Circuit boards would fail, and we constantly had to replace our PBX hardware," he recalls. "Our phone systems all had different auto attendants and procedures for adding users, making them hard to manage. We wanted to focus on servicing our own customers, not on installing and maintaining phone systems across Florida. Our PBX hardware wasn't scalable, so some of our capital investments went to waste. We realised that by moving our communications to the cloud, we could better align our costs and pay for what we need. It would be a much better investment going forward."

Solution:

Tewey and his team began evaluating cloud communication providers, and 8x8's industry leadership caught his eye right away. "I'm a big fan of Gartner's Magic Quadrant," he says, referring to the Gartner Group's well-known market research reports. "When I saw 8x8 listed as a leader there, I wanted to learn more about the solution."

"We asked to demo the solutions, and 8x8 shipped us some phones," he recalls. "Our executives plugged them in and they worked great! One of the other vendors had to bring in a server and two of their engineers spent a whole day setting it up. I was amazed that 8x8 didn't need to send anybody out."



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Results:

A bit cautious about introducing a new phone technology companywide, Tewey did the first phase of the implementation himself. He began by rolling out 8x8 service to his own IT division. It took just one day. "We're a technology company, so 8x8's technology intrigued me," he says. "I wanted to make sure it was really that easy to install—and it was!" Tewey's team then completed the rollout for the rest of the company's divisions and offices. "We held a web meeting for the entire company, which was the only phone training required," notes Tewey. "8x8 is so easy to use that we hardly ever get tickets from our employees."

Another key phase of the rollout involved the company's integration of 8x8 Virtual Contact Centre into its 24x7 service desk, which sits in Jacksonville and at some client sites. When handling customer contacts, the company prefers a "high touch" approach—and that means talking with customers live. Tewey's team integrated both 8x8 calls and voicemails into the company's Cherwell ticket system. Now when a customer leaves voicemail, it goes to the service delivery engine, which creates a ticket and assigns it a priority. This enables a callback within minutes, which Tewey calls a "golden app." "Clients are really happy when they get served quickly. It's taken our customer service up another notch."

To further enhance efficiency, MatrixOneSource uses 8x8 skills-based routing to match callers with knowledgeable agents. Tewey believes the service desk's low escalation rate speaks for itself. "We haven't had an IT customer leave us yet," he says.

Another popular phone feature, especially for remote sales people, is the 8x8 mobile app. In the past, sales people often gave out their personal mobile phone numbers to clients so they wouldn't miss their calls. If the sales person subsequently left the company, the client had only a personal contact number instead of a corporate one. 8x8's mobile app for iOS and Android devices allows sales people to use their smartphones as extensions of their office phones. The smartphone displays the company's 8x8 caller ID when employees make and take calls, protecting their privacy and ensuring that clients call in using company numbers.

8x8 cloud communications have also become the cornerstone of MatrixOneSource's disaster recovery strategy. Because the company is based in Florida, hurricanes are a force to be reckoned with. Yet with clients all over the world depending on the company's BPO and IT support, the phones cannot go down.

"Phones are crucial to us—to have them down for any length of time kills our business," says Tewey. "Our clients expect great service from us no matter what's going on in Florida."

The flexibility of 8x8's cloud-based service enables MatrixOneSource agents and employees to work anywhere—from home, at another office, or even out of state if necessary. "Having a cloud provider means I can move my people without missing a beat," says Tewey. "Even though a storm hits, we won't let our service levels drop."

"8x8's technology is easy, dependable, cost-effective, and can change the world," he says. "We go out of our way to avoid dealing with some of our other providers because the process is so painful. 8x8 is a breath of fresh air! They look for creative solutions and get back to us before they say they will. They don't tell us 'no' or 'no we can't.'" In fact, 8x8 is the only vendor MatrixOneSource recommends to its own clients.

What Our Customers Are Saying

“ We made the right decision in choosing 8x8. It's an investment that not only keeps our customers connected to us, but enhances our ability to serve them.

—Neil Jesani, Founder, President and CEO of BeamaLife Corporation

“ Our old system couldn't be reconfigured without a technician, so I felt helpless when we needed to change our call routing. 8x8 gives me control without depending on anyone. Instead of weeks, updates only take an hour.

— Alex Garcia, Staff Accountant (and phone system admin), Silverado Stages

“ By giving us control over our phone system, 8x8 enables us to communicate better with coworkers and with customers. And effective communication is the key to any successful business.

— Cory Medigovich, Digital Marketing Manager, Silverado Stages

“ Our service desk runs 24x7, and it is the lifeblood of our business. 8x8 provides business phone service that routes directly into its contact centre software, giving us a complete suite of business communication features for our service desk. 8x8's integrated solution was—by far—the easiest one to implement out of all the systems we evaluated.

Eric Tewey, CIO of MatrixOneSource

To learn more, call **1800 854 171** or visit www.8x8.com/au

