

UNIVERGE 3C™

Frandsen Financial Corporation

FRANSDEN FINANCIAL CORPORATION



Customer

- Frandsen Financial Corporation (FFC)

Industry

- Finance, Regional Interstate Banking

Challenges

- No internal communication network between 35+ locations
- Variety of difficult to maintain legacy phone systems with obsolete parts
- Limited contact with equipment and software manufacturers
- Poor system stability and reliability, with increasing phone service costs
- Unreachable mobile personnel visiting branch locations
- No conferencing or collaboration capability

Solution

- UNIVERGE 3C—(2) in a private Virtual Server
- VMWare virtual software and NEC Gateways (AudioCodes)
- Redundant SIP lines
- Collaboration Meeting Manager (CMM)

Results

- Unified, fully virtualized system, with responsive NEC support
- UC Client enables contact with mobile personnel
- Reliable and stable communication system
- Improved collaboration and customer service
- Reduced costs for operation and service

Founded in 1982, Frandsen Financial Corporation is an interstate bank holding company with full service community banks operating autonomously in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota. FFC has \$1.5 billion in assets to date, and its Wealth Management & Trust operations manage \$142 million in assets.

Their banking operations provide a wide array of banking products and services to their customers and communities; deposit accounts, loans, online banking, bill pay, eStatements, cash management, credit and check cards, electronic payments, ATMs, telephone banking, safe deposit boxes, and trust (Wealth Management & Trust), investment management (Frandsen Investment Services), and insurance (Frandsen Insurance Services). Financial products and services are provided in a community banking environment with emphasis on building lasting customer relationships.

FFC provides a variety of support services to its community banks, including; data and item processing, accounting, regulatory reporting, auditing, marketing, loan review, investment management, asset/liability and funds management, policy management, human resources, and training and compliance.

The mission of Frandsen Financial is to provide financial solutions that will create success for their customers and employees; to determine the needs and deliver the product and service solutions best suited to meet the needs of their customers and the community; to develop long-term banking relationships.

Challenges

Frandsen Bank & Trust has experienced continuous growth through acquisition, operating 35+ branch locations with unique and outdated private branch exchange (PBX) systems, and had reached the point in their growth where they needed to bring this continuously expanding group of organizations under one charter, one common organization. This also meant finding a way to modernize and to bring the variety of communication systems within one standardized system. The existing legacy systems could not be integrated.

“One of our core values is to communicate with our customers effectively and respectfully, and, frankly, our existing phone system was not allowing us to do that.”

Aging equipment was also an issue. Some units were actually failing, and so old phones were kept and used for parts, which not only affected down time but also time lost in the maintenance and repair of outdated equipment from multiple manufacturers.

The mix of PBX systems also impacted time spent by employees pursuing answers for customers as well as receiving necessary financial information from colleagues for workflow purposes, since internal calling throughout the organization required 10-digit dialing, with “hit or miss” access to the individual called. There was no “after hours” for customers, and no network, no sharing, no collaboration, no easy way for co-workers to contact each other.

Rich Hoban, CEO, stated, “One of our core values is to communicate with our customers effectively and respectfully, and, frankly, our existing phone system was not allowing us to do that.”

“We now have 4-digit dialing, are saving money on expenses and we think it’s going to be a great advantage to us in the future.”

Some Frandsen Financial Corporation executives make it a practice to travel throughout its multi-state region, visiting banks and connecting with employees. Ironically, without a systematic means of knowing which locations/ numbers to call, this executive mobility made it difficult for headquarters and other branches to contact them, and when located, availability was uncertain. Mobilized key personnel visiting branch locations could become unreachable by the other banks.

Without means of conferencing virtually, FFC’s corporate training required branch personnel to physically travel to the Arden Hills, Minnesota headquarters to meet for compliance training and orientation. Training costs incurred were significant in terms of lost productivity and travel.

Solution

Although several competitors demonstrated their products to Frandsen Financial decision makers, NEC proved to have all the right answers. The Frandsen Financial solution includes two UNIVERGE® 3C platforms, one located at Corporate in Arden Hills and the second at a remote data center. Both are housed in a Frandsen Virtual Server environment with VMWare virtual software, and with reliable NEC gateways (AudioCodes). This solution was specifically designed for this customer, to provide Frandsen Financial Corporation and their Frandsen Bank & Trust branches with a Private Cloud environment that is highly secure and reliable.

Steve Molander, CIO, said, “What we found with NEC was that one simple client installation was all we needed to get all the features we wanted, without “add-ons”—so, whether it’s phone calls, emails, IM, setting up a meeting, it all comes out of one client.”

According to Joshua Fox, FFC’s System Administrator, the installation and cutover was simple, with NEC’s integrator providing mentoring and guidance before and during the entire process. “The resulting network is extremely reliable to secure business continuity, with new incoming lines, redundant SIP lines, redundant NEC gateways and all NEC user equipment is standardized and modern.”





Collaboration Meeting Manager (CMM) is a sophisticated voice, video and web collaboration solution integrated within the UNIVERGE 3C software platform. CMM equips employees with the tools they need to stay informed, be more responsive, and better serve customers by enabling the convenient real-time exchange of information between customers and colleagues.

Joshua Fox also reports that “system administration is easy, and our technical support has been great. Assigning lines to new hires now takes only minutes, and installation is as easy as connecting a phone.”

The NEC UNIVERGE 3C solution together with CMM includes features such as presence notification, a single point for in-network 4-digit call initiation, internal collaboration, web sharing, voice conferencing and the easy set-up of web meetings.

For Frandsen Financial operations, the system launch began carefully, one bank at a time, fully expecting the increased capabilities of UNIVERGE 3C unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) and the CMM features to require a longer ramp up period for employees. The transition quickly progressed as it became apparent that usage was actually intuitive, and employees would readily engage with the technology when application learning was rolled out in stages.

Results

NEC’s UNIVERGE 3C unified communication system successfully connected the branches to each other, as well as to FFC headquarters. Rich Hoban, CEO, said, “We now have 4-digit dialing, are saving money on expenses and we think it’s going to be a great advantage to us in the future.”

For those mobilized personnel travelling between branches and headquarters, the UC client instantly identifies the current locations of employees, shows their presence/availability and contact information, and then allows call initiation with a simple click. With the new NEC technology, communication has become agile, secure, and has markedly improved operational efficiency.

Instant Messaging enabled employees to request and receive timely answers to customer questions, strengthening customer relations and building financial expert credibility through swift and private visual collaboration with knowledgeable internal resources.

CMM effectively reduced meeting costs and travel time, and improved communication and customer service. This collaboration application effectively replaces costly and inconvenient travel for corporate training, and the ease of meeting coordination is an added time saver that improves overall operational efficiency. Frandsen Financial Corporation’s future plans include increased leveraging of the virtual meeting capabilities. FFC noted lower training costs and improved productivity when personnel remained onsite at assigned locations and trained via web conferencing.

All Frandsen Bank & Trusts are fully integrated into their 3C virtual network, with new bank acquisitions continually added and their equipment then upgraded to high organizational standards.

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Strong Relationship with Our Customer

NEC’s channel partner and locally-based system integrator, Matrix, Inc., worked closely with this financial customer, developed a deep understanding of their business and technology pain points, and then recommended and ultimately assisted in the implementation of the NEC communication solution that best addressed Frandsen Financial Corporation’s unique needs. NEC’s UNIVERGE 3C solution was chosen for its range of capabilities, ease of use, cost effectiveness, and single point of contact for future NEC support.

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