



CASE STUDY:

ROSALIND FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY

At a Glance:



Situation:

- Need to replace aging legacy PBX system
- Avoid maintaining and paying support costs for in-house equipment
- Ability to add sites gradually over time

Solution:

- NET+ SIP Service
 - Clearspan
 - Meet-Me Audio Conferencing

Results:

- Secure, private and HIPAA-compliant communications solution
- Integration with existing call recording solution
- Simple and efficient provisioning of new users and sites
- Redundancy and failover capabilities at all locations

Summary

Teaching some of today's brightest minds how to prepare for a future in health care is a huge responsibility. Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (RFU), which brings together five colleges and over 30 graduate health profession and science programs, focuses on team-based, interdisciplinary learning and practice opportunities, making it a leader in "interprofessional" medical and healthcare education and research. Faced with an aging legacy PBX system, the university needed a more modern communications solution for its faculty, staff, physicians and more than 2,000 students. Through Internet2 NET+, RFU turned to Clearspan for a modern, cloud-based communications system.



Rosalind Franklin University

Founded in 1912, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science comprises five colleges and over 30 graduate health profession and science programs. Rosalind Franklin provides rigorous academics, pioneering research and an innovative approach to community service that shapes the future of healthcare.

Focusing Resources on Teaching, Not Managing Phone Systems

According to RFU's Chief Information Officer, Richard Loesch, the university was at a crossroads regarding its 20+ year old legacy phone system. No longer supported by the manufacturer, it required third-party support, and parts were hard to find. When it was finally time to make the move, and after looking at three other vendors, RFU chose Clearspan, one of the trusted solutions through Internet2 NET+, which provides universities and other research and educational organizations a portfolio of offerings to help accelerate the adoption of cloud solutions. Through Internet2 NET+, RFU knew that Clearspan's cloud solution underwent rigorous, peer-driven security, accessibility and performance reviews.

The Clearspan private cloud system, which was built for enterprises, universities, and large institutions, was the most logical solution for RFU, which wanted to manage its own operation without the responsibility of managing the phone system infrastructure. In addition, Clearspan lets the university take advantage of the customized service, terms and pre-negotiated pricing offered through Internet2 NET+.

Moving to a cloud solution was the most reasonable choice for RFU. According to Loesch, "We suspected a cloud-based system would be the best solution, as it's the most cost-effective way to replace our legacy system."

He added that a cloud solution lets RFU avoid having to maintain and pay support costs for in-house equipment, noting that it doesn't make sense for an organization of their size to maintain their own PBX system.

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**Richard Loesch, Chief Information Officer,
Rosalind Franklin University**

Loesch stated, "The cloud is a more cost-effective model, and the maintenance is easier, as we do everything through a web interface and can make changes to calling options without having any proprietary programming."

RFU's goal was to deploy the new service at its 80-acre main North Chicago campus across six buildings. The new phone system would also be used by satellite offices for simulation-based education, as well as RFU's health clinic subsidiary with four locations, each with 25 phones or less. As the leases on these facilities end and the clinics move to different locations every few years, RFU needed a flexible communications system that would make it easy to bring up the new sites quickly.

Starting with a small deployment to test and learn, the RFU IT team initially implemented the Clearspan system for the Department of Healthcare Simulation satellite office.



As Loesch explained, “The simulated hospital teaching facility was small enough in scope to give us experience implementing the new system. We knew that going to the campus-wide implementation wouldn’t be a challenge based on our experience with the smaller implementation.”

After this initial implementation, the university deployed the system at its other locations and campuses.

The overall solution incorporates over 1,500 users, including about 1,400 Mitel IP phone sets, numerous soft phone users, and over 60 analog devices, as well as a High Availability (HA) pair of session border controllers (SBCs) at the main campus for phone registrations. The Clearspan solution also includes 50 participant Meet-Me Audio Conferencing licenses, as well as connectivity to the university’s existing NICE call recording system.

Overcoming Concerns

Loesch admits that initially he was somewhat reluctant to move to the cloud, as the cloud eliminates the ability to see and touch a physical piece of equipment. Security and privacy was another initial concern, as RFU’s health clinic subsidiary requires security and HIPAA compliance. Quickly overcoming these concerns, Loesch noted that he has been extremely satisfied with the quality and reliability of the new phone system. With encrypted communications between the end user’s phone and the cloud PBX, Clearspan’s solution provides a secure communication channel that meets RFU’s needs.

Results for the Academic Enterprise

The cloud service delivered as expected with the university realizing many benefits, including cost savings, agility, business continuity, and more.

Loesch noted, “As we hoped, we lowered our operating costs. We expected cost savings by moving away from an in-house PBX with expensive PRI-based services and related support costs, and had hoped for a five-year payback on the phone system. We were surprised to see that we were saving 40% on our monthly phone service and we’ll see a financial payback in just two years, rather than five.”

Loesch plans to use these savings to invest in RFU’s network infrastructure in order to be better prepared for future capabilities such as advanced video. In addition to the cost savings, there were several intangible benefits.

According to Loesch, “We converted the main campus to the new cloud system over the course of a weekend, which proved how easy it was for my team to get comfortable with managing the new system.”

His team is able to do provisioning of all new handsets, as well as any minor changes such as resetting PINs when users get locked out of their voicemail boxes. Using the simple web interface on a desktop or laptop to log into the administration portal, Loesch and his IT team can do most of the functions needed, and only require help from Clearspan when they make complex changes to templates.

Loesch notes, “With our previous phone system, we had only one person who was able to manage the system; now I don’t have to worry about that single point of failure.”

One of the key benefits of the cloud is its redundancy. RFU now has redundant Internet circuits, as well as failover capabilities at all of the locations.

Despite initial fears about moving to a VoIP service in the cloud, Loesch claims that the entire experience has been very positive, calling it “an all-around win.”

He added, “It’s rare to see a trifecta in the IT world where you have a better system providing advanced features, while being easier to manage, at a lower monthly operating cost.”

Looking Ahead

For the future, RFU will be moving to a cloud fax solution, and Loesch is continually looking at advanced features that are available with the system. He and his team will also be ramping up internal awareness to educate people on additional features and capabilities that are available with the cloud service, such as visual voicemail, noting that they had been on a legacy solution for so long that “people don’t know about all of the capabilities they can now use.”

Learning Its Own Lessons

Based on this experience, RFU had learned some lessons of its own. For example, the university underestimated its reliance on analog phone lines and POTS circuits. Beyond typical analog systems, such as elevators and fire alarms, RFU realized there were many less obvious analog systems, such as time clocks and gas meters, that needed to be converted from analog to VoIP. The university also overestimated the number of phones required. Expecting to need the same number as they currently had, they found that some phones didn't exist while others had multiple numbers. The lesson learned is to do a more thorough inventory of what's being used and where.

Lastly, Loesch noted that RFU should have expected more from its former phone provider, which locked the university into multi-year agreements, with no leverage to demand better service. The old phone provider's lack of responsiveness and openness became apparent after RFU began working with Clearspan, which exceeded expectations by being open and honest, and "taking a fresh look at what was actually required in a phone system."

Rosalind Franklin University, like its students, is always learning and overcame initial fears to embrace cloud communications.

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**Richard Loesch, Chief Information Officer,
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