



CASE STUDY:

OVERLAND FOOTWEAR GROUP

At a Glance:



Situation:

- Outdated on-prem telephony system was becoming harder and more expensive to maintain, while being incompatible with core Microsoft solutions
- Poor call quality and frequent drop outs due to power and other issues meant even basic communications were failing
- As the pandemic took hold, technicians were being dispatched to different sites every week, with one store without communications for more than a fortnight

Solution:

- MiCloud Flex
- Customer Experience
- Collaboration

Results:

- Super reliable, fully cloud-based telephony system utilizing existing phones and softphones making the team better connected and more responsive to customer needs
- Seamless technical integration with Microsoft suite, including Teams, as well as consolidated licensing
- More than 20 percent reduction in annual communications charges in return for dramatically improved user experience

Summary

Overland Footwear was struggling with an outdated, increasingly unreliable on-prem telephony system. With business – and the team – growing across its 55 stores in New Zealand and Australia, the company started a conversation with Mitel and HiTech about moving to a fully integrated, cloud-based system that has brought the team closer together and closer to their customers.



Company

Overland Footwear is one of New Zealand's most loved and enduring retailers, fitting generations of Kiwis – and more recently Aussies too – with quality footwear for every occasion. A family business with humble beginnings in New Zealand's North Island in the late 1940s, Overland Footwear now operates from 55 Merchant 1948 and Mi Piaci stores on either side of the Tasman, including five in Australia.

Situation

For a dynamic retail business like Overland Footwear, the ability of the team to communicate within and between stores, as well as with suppliers and customers is critical. The company has a team of 435 across New Zealand and Australia helping tens of thousands of customers either side of the Tasman have happier feet.

"Our customers are our number one priority and creating meaningful connections with them is incredibly important to us," said Bob Kombora, Overland Footwear's IT manager.

When COVID hit, he and the IT team were challenged to ensure everyone could communicate from anywhere during lockdowns, which were especially harsh in Auckland, Overland Footwear's Support Office.

The team were flat out manually diverting calls to colleagues' personal mobile phones. But even before the pandemic, Overland Footwear's outdated on-prem telephony system was leading to frequent dropouts and poor call quality, while becoming harder and more expensive to maintain.

"We had outages all the time, we had massive disconnect between where we were and where we needed to be," Kombora recalled.

Problems with power and other issues meant support technicians were being sent out to different stores every week, while one store had no phone communications for more than a fortnight. Meanwhile, call volumes were increasing day-by-day meaning total replacement was inevitable.

Solution

Working with long-standing technology partner, Auckland-based systems integrator HiTech, Overland Footwear selected a fully cloud-based telephony solution from Mitel, which allowed it to preserve much of its existing investment, while also getting more value out of its Microsoft licenses.

Mitel's phone system was able to be integrated with HiTech's SBC (session border controller) platform via SIP (session initiation protocol) enabling the Overland Footwear team to communicate seamlessly between Mitel softphones and desk phones and Microsoft Teams. Mitel's open API capabilities made the set up even easier.

"New store phones were able to be connected to the Mitel solution allowing for full functionality, with more flexibility and for much less cost than would have been

"We've now got two phone systems working and talking together in complete synergy."

**Bob Kombora, IT Manager
Overland Footwear**

possible using Microsoft alone," Kombora explained. "We've now got two phone systems working and talking together in complete synergy."

According to Overland Footwear systems engineer, Jason Pimenta "deployment was really straight forward".

"For the Teams integration, it was as simple as running a PowerShell script and assigning the correct Microsoft licenses for each user," he noted.

"And for the Mitel system, once the new phone units were set up, the HiTech guys just needed a couple of minutes to switch the DDL (direct dial line) from the old system to Mitel and we were off."

Results

Overland Footwear now has an enterprise-grade communications system more than capable of supporting the complex and changing needs of a significant retail business. Fully integrated, software-driven and running in the cloud, Kombora and his team, meanwhile, hardly need to think about it.

"We now have a completely scalable phone solution no matter what country we're in," he enthused. "Everything is done in the background and we're now able to focus on other systems and processes."

Overland Footwear has also realized significant and immediate financial benefits with Mitel, shaving at least 20 percent from its annual communications costs. Much of this was due to the clever integration of Mitel with Microsoft Teams.

"Many companies went to Microsoft during the pandemic only to realize they don't actually support enterprise voice in the most seamless and cost-effective way," Kombora explained. "But for us, if someone in Teams calls someone on the Mitel platform it's seamless and with no extra costs."

For the Overland Footwear team, be they senior management, in-store, or in other roles, the deployment of Mitel with HiTech has had a profound impact on the business as it looks to rebound stronger after COVID-19. Lockdowns showed the shortcomings of its old phone system which couldn't support communications outside of the network.

"Call forwarding was a big pain, but it's not anymore," Kombora said. "It's absolutely fantastic we now know we can service our customers anywhere and at anytime".

And while the integration of Mitel with Teams has rarely - if ever - been successfully achieved, the deployment and training of the team on the new system was completely seamless, he added.

"The software is lot easier to set up, navigate and use."

In addition to resolving its immediate communications challenges, the Mitel solution has also given Overland Footwear deeper visibility into its day-to-day operations across the company, Kombora noted: "We have insights we didn't have before".

Overland Footwear's tech partner, HiTech played a key role in identifying and integrating the right solution.

"No one had to panic or stress; the ease of installation and user experience were absolutely fantastic."

**Bob Kombora, IT Manager
Overland Footwear**

"There are very few partners out there who could have bridged the two technology platforms [Mitel and Microsoft] the way they were able to," Kombora said.

Reflecting on the experience, from resolving to upgrade its existing systems to choosing the best technology partners for the journey, Kombora concluded that Mitel and HiTech was the perfect combination.

"No one had to panic or stress; the ease of installation and user experience were absolutely fantastic. The platform just works."

Looking ahead, Kombora said he's now investigating Mitel's contact center solution, as well as its unique offerings around data analytics, AI and CRM.

"I'd like to leverage those capabilities to see what new insights we can gather, such as predicting who's calling and possibly triaging calls using AI."



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