

## **FREED OF LONDON IMPROVES PERFORMANCE WITH TOSHIBA SOLUTION FROM CARE TELECOM**

**OVER £4,000 PER YEAR SAVED THROUGH REDUCED OPERATIONAL COSTS, AND IMPROVED INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

### **HISTORY**

Freed of London was founded in 1952 by Frederick Freed and his wife, in the basement of 94 St Martin's Lane, Covent Garden. Since then the company has grown to become an internationally renowned ballet shoe and dancewear producer, and the official shoe provider to a number of national ballets.

Freed manufactures over 250,000 pairs of Pointe Ballet Shoes a year, with every Pointe Shoe maker producing between 25 and 40 pairs a day. Despite the high volume, each is still created using Frederick Freed's original turned-shoe method. As every ballet shoe is made to order to very precise measurements, communication between the sales department and shoe manufacturers is vital to ensure the shoes fit correctly, and are ready for performances.

The company has grown to over 240 employees and is spread over five sites in the UK: a factory and shop in London, a distribution and finishing centre in Leicester and secondary factory in Norwich. As Freed's business grew, new, independent telephone systems were installed to meet the requirements at the time. As a result, the communications infrastructure was not designed to deliver integrated internal communication, with each site having a different system and telephone number.

Kay Ash, Director at Freed of London, explains: "To remain competitive, we felt there was a need to review our telephone system. Our employees need to communicate customer orders effectively, and liaise with suppliers to make sure orders are delivered on time. Our previous set-up was becoming expensive due to the number of external calls being made between sites, and employees using the system to make personal calls."

Freed wanted to restructure its telephone system to provide better communication between sites, improving efficiency and employee productivity. Due to the nature of the business, Freed felt it was important to offer employees roaming capabilities to enable calls to be answered from anywhere in the building. In addition, individual voicemail was required to give employees the ability to respond quickly to any missed calls.

### **THE PERFECT PARTNER**

Care Telecom, the communications management specialists for small to medium-sized enterprises, designed and implemented a unique communications infrastructure for Freed, based on its specific requirements.

Two Strata CIX100 platforms from Toshiba Business Communications Division (BCD) were installed - one in the London factory, and a second in the Leicester distribution centre. The Strata CIX systems are easily linked together as a single system, meaning all sites can seamlessly take advantage of the rich set of features within the Strata CIX solution.

“The solution Care Telecom designed allows all locations to function as one. The London factory acts as a receptionist for the group whilst simultaneously making it possible to retain the previous numbers,” Ash comments. “This means we eliminate the need for a receptionist on each site, as the London factory can see the availability of every extension and route the calls appropriately.”

The remaining three sites are then connected to the Strata CIX’s via a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Integrating the telephony platforms using a broadband network has allowed Freed to use WiFi SIP handsets, pre-configured to register landline extensions to enable the existing telephone numbers to be retained.

Freed is also taking advantage of other sophisticated features the Toshiba platform offers; each member of the management team has a personalised voicemail facility, meaning customer and supplier calls are never missed no matter where they are in the building. In addition, all sites benefit from call restrictions to remote locations, preventing non-work calls.

### **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Freed has gained considerable competitive advantage since the installation of the new telephony solution. Improved internal communication has led to better employee productivity, and an enhanced customer experience. Operational costs have been reduced considerably; over £3,000 per year is saved using a broadband connection rather than the original lease-line, almost £1,000 per year is saved on line rental, call charges and system maintenance.

Kay Ash, Director at Freed of London, states: “The telephony solution brings together every Freed employee in the UK, and will help us work more efficiently for the benefit of our customers. It has delivered exceptional value, and most notably all staff are within easy reach of each other, especially management who in our case are spread across our locations.”