



Vocera Speeds Up Customer Service for Public Library System Orange County Library System, FL

Communications System Reduces Waiting-in-Line Time for Patrons, Increases Staff Productivity

SUMMARY: The Vocera Communications System boosts public service in a major county library by enabling librarians to take a hands-on approach to helping people navigate the library's extensive materials to find what they need quickly and effectively. It also eases the reference service load of librarians stationed at a desk, allowing them to focus more on servicing the needs of their patrons, and creates a highly flexible work environment.

In summary, the system allows instant communications, which allows the mobile work force to remain connected, communicating customer needs quickly through Vocera. The result: staff can be better prepared, anticipating and exceeding patron expectations. The Vocera Communications System was installed in February 2003.

THE FACTS: The main library of the Orange County Library System (OCLS), based in Orlando, Fla. installed the Vocera Communications System to improve staff communication throughout the building. The library, a 290,000-square-foot facility on six floors that takes up an entire city block, has 150 staff who serve the information needs of hundreds of visitors daily. No stranger to wireless connectivity, the library currently has 16 wireless access points in areas where PCs are located for patrons to access the Internet.

PROBLEM: Before installing the Vocera System, library staff often was confined to specific work spaces, which limited their ability to assist library patrons to their fullest.

SITUATION: Upon entering the library, patrons would walk to the front desk and ask for assistance from the librarian or staff member to locate a book, reference source, or other materials. Most often, the librarian would provide directions to the materials from behind the desk, hoping the patron would be able to find them. Often materials were hard to find as the subject could be on multiple floors or in a nook that would be difficult to locate. Or, if the patron found the materials, they would seek additional help, but would not know where to find assistance on that particular floor.

From the CIO's perspective, the system did not allow flexibility for the staff to serve the library's patrons effectively. In essence, the library staff's work was defined by their work space rather than by their ability to fulfill patron's needs to find information and materials they needed in a timely manner.

SOLUTION: The IS manager of the OCLS contacted Vocera Communications to address the need for librarians and other staff to roam the floors helping patrons while staying in contact with their colleagues. As a first step, the Vocera team and a member of the Datavision team completed a walk-through and an informal



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site survey of the library, which revealed many 802.11 dead spots. The library staff installed additional access points throughout the facility to resolve the coverage issue and then initiated a three-day deployment schedule.

The library installed a Vocera System consisting of 75 user licenses and 50 Vocera Communications Badges that are rotated from staff to staff between shifts. Some badges are assigned to individual users, example “Jan Morris,” others are assigned by job function, example “reference desk.”

On the first day, Datavision’s team installed the Vocera Server Software, and the Vocera Communications Badges were configured. The second day, librarians and staff were trained in groups of four to six people. The staff was very excited and eager to start using the Badges. The last day of the deployment schedule, Datavision’s staff stayed on site to help users become familiar with the system.

With the Vocera Communications System, the librarian or staff member stationed behind a desk can now call ahead to the librarian closest to the reference materials requested and alert him or her that the patron is on their way. Once there, the patron is greeted by the librarian and directed to the materials.

For example, a patron comes to the front desk and informs the staff member that he or she is conducting research on Brazil. All travel materials are located on the third floor, so the staff member simply uses their Vocera Badge to “call a staff member on the third floor.” The

system locates and connects the librarian with the first available staff member on the third floor. A brief dialogue occurs between the front desk librarian and the third-floor staff member. The staff member then stands at the third-floor information desk ready to greet the patron and direct him or her to all the books on Brazil.

Now that the Vocera System is installed, there are plans to add 65 access points to provide even wider coverage in areas such as private meeting rooms and maintenance areas.

“The advantage for the library user and taxpayer is expeditious service and more efficient use of staff time and materials,” says Mary Anne Hodel, library director/CEO of the Orange County Library System. “Furthermore, Vocera helps create a more secure work environment where staff can instantly connect to coworkers, managers, custodians, and building security.”

During slow times at the circulation desk, extra staff can leave the area to shelve books and provide directional assistance. If the circulation desk becomes busy, managers can recall these staff instantly to assist.

According to Eric Atkinson, the library’s information systems manager, “We’re using the system in ways we hadn’t envisioned. Vocera has allowed us to expand flexibility, enhance services, and reduce costs for maintaining our network. The payback for the library user is shorter lines and less waiting. And the payback for the taxpayer is more efficient use of staff time.”



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