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How Judson ISD Saved Money and Streamlined Communications with Cloud-Based Voice

This large Texas school district was searching for a more affordable, scalable, modern and robust alternative to their aging, failing on-prem phone system.

The Challenge

Judson Independent School District (Judson) in Live Oak, Texas, is a large K-12 school district supporting almost 26,000 students and over 3,200 staff members across 28 schools. Located in the greater San Antonio metro area – one of the fastest growing metros in the U.S. – Judson is experiencing rapid year-over-year growth, adding more than 3,000 new students in the past two years alone.

With a growing body of students and staff to support, creating scalable and future-ready IT systems is critical to the district's success. That's why when Lacey Gosch joined Judson as Assistant Superintendent of Technology in 2021, she immediately began spearheading multiple transformational projects to build a pathway for the district's future.
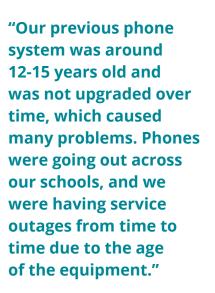
One of the first projects her team tackled was replacing the district's decades-old and costly telephony infrastructure with modern and mobile cloud communications.

Legacy phone system gets a failing grade

Judson's previous phone platform was outdated, hosted on-premises, and had multiple points of failure, resulting in outages that negatively impacted staff productivity.

In addition to its unreliable infrastructure, the platform was expensive and inflexible. The district was burdened by exorbitant costs for support and equipment replacements, hurting Judson's bottom line and leaving no room in the budget to expand their system.

> **"Our previous phone system was around 12-15 years old and was not upgraded over time, which caused many problems. Phones were going out across our schools, and we were having service outages from time to time due to the age of the equipment."**
>
> *Lacey Gosch,*
> *Assistant Superintendent*
> *of Technology*
> *Judson Independent School District*

The Challenge (Continued)

"Our old platform was not expandable at all in terms of cost," said Gosch. "Because of that, we couldn't have phones in classrooms, which was a major safety and security concern for the district. If a teacher needed to call a parent or internal department, they had to use a phone down the hallway, in a closet, or share a phone."

On top of this, the system lacked essential call routing and mobility features:

- Voicemails couldn't be accessed remotely

- Secretaries had to use multiple pieces of software to forward calls

- Administrators had no way to address calls when they were away from desk phones or off-site

- The system's sheer complexity made it difficult for IT members to update extensions as staff moved or changed roles

- Staff had to use their own phone numbers when making calls to parents, coworkers and the community if they worked from home.

With so many issues and escalating expenses, Gosch knew a complete system replacement was in order. However, in their due diligence, Judson quickly discovered that refreshing the existing system came at a hefty price.

Having worked with hosted phone systems in the past, Gosch knew migrating to a cloud-based system would be the more affordable and flexible solution, while also delivering productivity-enhancing features the district's end users needed.

> **"It was going to be upwards of $2 million to simply replace our existing system, not including adding any new phones to our classrooms, which was a major priority for the district."**
>
> *Lacey Gosch,*
> *Assistant Superintendent*
> *of Technology*
> *Judson Independent School District*

The Solution

After evaluating their options, Judson selected ENA by Zayo's cloud-based phone platform due to its affordability, scalability, reliability, and feature set.

Leveraging ENA by Zayo's purchasing contract with Region 20 Education Service Center (ESC20), Judson was able to simplify and expedite the procurement process. Project managers dedicated to Judson's installation quickly went to work implementing their new voice system district- wide with 3,400 voice accounts and new IP phones.

> **"The amount of time our team spends on phone maintenance has absolutely been reduced. This has enabled them to be able to bridge out and support other departments and teams."**
>
> *Lacey Gosch,*
> *Assistant Superintendent*
> *of Technology*
> *Judson Independent School District*

Results

In addition to saving money, Judson was able to add phones to every classroom. As their district grows, expanding their phone system is now incredibly easy. With a cloud-hosted platform, Judson doesn't have to worry about installing phone lines or upgrading hardware – they can simply add new handsets and service plans when they need to.

From feature deficient to feature rich

Judson's new phone system also equipped staff with long-awaited features including virtual voicemail, which enables users to check their voicemails from anywhere by simply accessing their online portal.

"We've programmed our tech help desk number into every phone and staff enjoy how they can easily search through the district directory and quickly find who they're trying to call."

With the new feature set, Judson's call routing process has also been streamlined. Auto attendants are set up at every site to help callers reach their intended destination, secretaries can easily forward calls with the push of a few buttons, and a multi-line hunt group for the district's tech support line ensures every call is answered as quickly as possible.

With integrated mobility, Judson admins can use their professional phone extensions on their personal devices whenever they're away from their desks or off-site. And if the district ever needs to go back to remote operations again, Judson is equipped with a flexible system that can keep everyone connected from anywhere.

> "We've spent the last year and a half shoring up our cybersecurity and now we're looking at other systems including cabling, switches, wiring, cameras, visitor check-in, and more. We're also looking at creating model classrooms, adding interactive panels, adding new district academies, potentially setting up an E-sports program, and upgrading our projection systems. There are a lot of exciting things on the horizon for Judson."
>
> *Lacey Gosch,*
> *Assistant Superintendent*
> *of Technology*
> *Judson Independent School District*

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Benefits

Judson's 55-member IT team oversees everything from infrastructure and cybersecurity to desktop services, instructional technology, student data services, library services, and more. With so much on their plate, reducing workloads and increasing efficiencies is always top of mind.

Streamlining maintenance and reducing management

With their new hosted phone system, Judson enjoys ongoing proactive maintenance, firmware updates, and 24x7 technical support at no additional cost – reducing time and money spent on phone management.

Moreover, Judson's new online portal enables phone administrators to easily change user settings, manage devices, configure phones, manage call groups, and more. "With this new system, we were able to streamline our data and organize phone number extensions by department and location," said Gosch.

On the horizon

With their migration to cloud-based VoIP complete, Judson's sustainable and scalable phone system can easily handle the district's future growth.

When asked what's next, Gosch excitedly shared that her team is just getting started in transforming Judson into a future-focused district.

About Zayo

For more than 15 years, Zayo has empowered some of the world's largest and most innovative companies to connect what's next for their business. Zayo's future-ready network spans over 16.5 million fiber miles and 141,000 route miles. Zayo's tailored connectivity and edge solutions enable carriers, cloud providers, data centers, schools, and enterprises to deliver exceptional experiences, from core to cloud to edge.

Connect what's next for your business.

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