



NextiraOne & HBS help Bedfordshire Council achieve e-government aims

Alcatel OmniTouch Contact Centre technology installed to bring authority closer to the local community

London, 12th May, 2003 - NextiraOne UK, a leading provider of world-class communications services and solutions, and HBS (HBS Business Services Group Ltd), a market leader in business services, have designed and implemented a 45-seat IP contact centre at Bedfordshire County Council – the first of its kind to be used in UK local government. The new contact centre, based on Alcatel's OmniTouch Contact Centre technology, will form a key element in Bedfordshire County Council's plan to meet the Government's 2005 deadline for putting all services online for public access, providing a joined up view of the authority and making it easier for local people to obtain information. This is the first of a two-phase implementation due to be completed early next year and is a fundamental part of the HBS/Bedfordshire County Council 12-year £267million public-private-partnership.

"There are more than 360,000 people living in Bedfordshire," said Dick Wilkinson, Chief Executive at Bedfordshire County Council. "It is vitally important that we use emerging technologies to find out about their needs. Our new contact centre solution will help us to offer our communities greater choice and more flexible and efficient services."

Bedfordshire County Council receives enquiries for the entire range of public services; from social service queries to student award information and IT support. Before the installation there was no way of automatically fielding the call to the relevant department so it could be difficult for members of the public to obtain the required information. The new system will allow calls to be routed directly to the most qualified employee, maximising the caller satisfaction.

"Our aim is to help UK local Councils achieve central Government targets for service delivery," said Simon Gibbs, Managing Director, NextiraOne. "Our strength in communications services together with HBS' business services expertise means we are a perfectly placed to partner with local councils under the Government's public-private schemes."

The IP installation is also enabling Bedfordshire County Council to expand its remote working capabilities to help support the role of supply teachers in the local community. Calls can come in at any time requesting a supply teacher for the next day, so easy access to up to date and accurate information is essential. The introduction of IP with the contact centre means remote teachers can economically and securely log on to the council network from home and access

information, such as lesson plans, as if they were in the office.

"Bedfordshire is the perfect example of a local authority fulfilling the e-government initiative," said Nigel Jones, of Alcatel networking activities. "The IP contact centre delivers good return on investment and enables the local authority to maximise its resources, while benefiting from the most advanced technology available. It is now much easier and more efficient to contact Bedfordshire County Council."

"This new contact centre is a fundamental element of our partnership with Bedfordshire County Council," said Terry Woodhouse, HBS Southern Region Managing Director. "The Government's e-Govt strategy sets tight deadlines for local authorities to bring their services online for public access and this considerable investment by HBS is among the first steps in ensuring that the County Council meets that 2005 deadline".

About Bedfordshire County Council

For more details about Bedfordshire County Council and its commitment to e-government please contact the press office on (01234) 228888. An overview of the Council's work and commitment to e-government is featured in a new booklet: Putting our citizens at the centre of what we do. Copies are available from the Council's website (www.bedfordshire.gov.uk).

About NextiraOne

Headquartered in Paris, France and Houston, Texas, USA, NextiraOne (www.nextiraone.com) is a leading provider of world-class solutions and LifeCycleSM services – from planning and design to the implementation, support, and management of voice, data and converged communications networks. As a global service organization that carries an extensive portfolio of certifications and product expertise, NextiraOne provides best-in-class technologies from leading partners, such as Alcatel, Cisco Systems, Genesys and Nortel Networks. NextiraOne offers consultation and solutions development ranging from contact centre applications to network infrastructure outsourcing.

About HBS

HBS is a market leader in business services. The partnership with Bedfordshire County Council began in June 2001 and is a 12-year, £267million ppp (Public Private Partnership) contract. A range of key support services are delivered as part of the contract including information technology, human resources, facilities management and finance. The implementation of the new contact centre forms part of the contract. The County's 220 schools will also see improved support services including advisory services, information technology and human resources. In addition to its partnership with Bedfordshire County Council, HBS has similar PPP contracts with Lincolnshire County Council and Middlesbrough Borough Council. With staff numbers of approximately 5,000 HBS has a turnover of £180 million and a forward order book of £1.5 billion.

About Alcatel

Alcatel designs, develops and builds innovative and competitive communications networks, enabling carriers, service providers and enterprises to deliver any type of content, such as voice, data and multimedia, to any type of consumer, anywhere in the world. Relying on its leading and comprehensive products and solutions portfolio, stretching from end-to-end optical infrastructures, fixed and mobile networks to broadband access, Alcatel's customers can focus on optimising their service offerings and revenue streams. With sales of EURO 25 billion in 2001,

Alcatel operates in more than 130 countries. For more information, visit Alcatel on the Internet:
<http://www.alcatel.com>

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