

STRATA

Toshiba STRATA CS



TOP GRADE

Construction



STRATA CS

Toshiba Scores An A+ At Top Grade Construction

Located in Livermore, Calif., Top Grade Construction is in one of the country's busiest regions for construction, the Silicon Valley. To provide its specialty paving services, the company relies on its telephones to communicate with its customers as well as its 250 construction workers. Top Grade Construction turned to ATS Communications of Concord, Calif., for a Toshiba Strata CS telephone system.

Brian Gehrke, network systems administrator of Top Grade Construction, said, "We've used Toshiba telecom products for more than 10 years, and we've always been pleased with their performance, durability, and flexibility. When Larry Smith and John Zeller of ATS Communications came to us with Toshiba's Strata CS, we knew we'd found the perfect system to take us into the future."

Connected Two Buildings Together

Using fiber and analog converters, ATS Communications linked Top Grade's two buildings together so employees at both buildings can enjoy the benefits of the Strata CS system.

Gehrke said, "We are pleased with the ease with which the Strata CS can accommodate our two locations. Now our employees can dial three-digit extensions to reach each other, transfer calls faster, and access their voice mail more easily."

Increased Efficiency Gets Daily Dispatches To Workers

Because most of Top Grade's workers are out in the field, the telephone has become an important tool to relay daily dispatch information, including where to go and how to get there.

Using the Strata CS, ATS Communications set up an automatic dispatch voice mail, which allows the dispatchers to record voice messages for the workers. Zeller, who is president of ATS Communications, explained, "The dispatchers can record one voice message for each dispatch location and then assign that greeting to the mail boxes for as many workers as appropriate. The workers then call in from virtually anywhere and, using their personal identification number, they pick up their messages and get the information they need to get to their jobs. The messages are recorded in both English and Spanish, so there are no language barriers."

He added, "Not only can the workers get their voice messages, but we've set it up for the dispatchers to be able to easily run a report of which workers have picked up their calls. This way, they can easily see if there are any workers who need to be called directly."

Prior to setting up the automatic dispatch voice mail, Top Grade dispatchers had to begin very early each day calling the hundreds of workers about their assignments for that day. Gehrke said, "The ability to set up the automatic dispatch voice mail greatly

Brian Gehrke of Top Grade (center) programs his Strata CS with the help of John Zeller (left) and Larry Smith of ATS Communications.



improves the productivity for our dispatchers. Rather than calling all the workers, they can just concentrate on those who didn't get their messages."

System Customized To Accommodate A Live Operator

Although most Strata CS users prefer the automated attendant, Top Grade wanted to have a live operator. Gehrke explained, "Personalized service is one of the things that really sets us apart from our competition, and having a live operator is part of our dedication to customer service."

Working with Toshiba's customer service engineers, ATS Communications customized the Strata CS to accommodate a live operator. In fact, according to Gehrke, one of the key goals of the system was to improve the operator's call handling ability. He said, "The Strata CS PC client has greatly improved our operator's productivity. With two quick clicks of the mouse, she can answer a call and transfer it to the right extension."

When the operator is busy, the system is programmed to go into the automated attendant, which asks the caller to hold. "It saves a lot of time for the operator not to have to answer those calls and put them on hold," Gehrke said.

"Top Grade Construction typically gets more than 300 incoming calls a week, so it's essential that its system work flawlessly. That's exactly what the Strata CS delivers," Smith pointed out.

Follow-Me Capability Helps Foremen And Owners Get All Their Calls

In addition to the 250 construction workers, Top Grade has 30 foremen who spend most of their time out in the field supervising jobs. The follow-me call forwarding feature has been very helpful with getting their calls in a timely manner.

"Most of our foremen have their phones set up with the follow-me feature, so their calls are automatically forwarded right to their cell phones," Gehrke said. "This has greatly improved their ability to get their calls and has also eliminated the pile-up of voice messages back at the office. This improves their efficiency by allowing them to handle calls throughout the day, thus avoiding the phone-tag of returning calls in the evening."

The company's estimators and top executives also appreciate the follow-me feature. "Often, a potential customer wants a bid right away, so having the follow-me capability means that these calls get through to our estimators or owners very quickly," he explained. "By getting these calls quickly, our estimators can immediately get out to the potential customers' sites, give bids, and lock in deals faster than ever before."

Integrated Voice Mail And E-Mail

Top Grade's executives and administrative workers use the Strata CS PC client to integrate their voice mail and e-mail. Gehrke said, "Being able to see both our voice mail and e-mail on a single platform greatly increases the efficiency of the overall communication with both internal and external people."

For those employees who don't have the PC client, the Telephone User Interface (TUI) provides simple instructions for everyday telephone operations, such as recording outgoing voice mail greetings, transferring calls, and programming speed dial numbers.

System Administration Is As Simple As ABC

As the system administrator, Gehrke is responsible for programming the system, setting up new phones, adding or changing extensions, and much more. He said, "One



Brian Gehrke of Top Grade (center), along with Larry Smith (left) and John Zeller of ATS Communications, appreciate the reliability and flexibility of Toshiba's Strata CS.



Brian Gehrke of Top Grade makes adjustments to the Strata CS in the networking/telephony room at Top Grade's Livermore headquarters.

Toshiba America Information Systems, Inc. Telecommunication Systems Division

9740 Irvine Blvd., Irvine, CA 92618-1697
(949) 583-3700
www.telecom.toshiba.com

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of the best things about this system is that I can administrate it here, without needing a service call."

"The Strata CS system administrator is straightforward and intuitive. I can create or delete users on the system, set up custom routing lists, and easily program features for our top executives," Gehrke added.

Ability To Use Toshiba Phones

Gehrke appreciated the ability to save on his budget by using Toshiba telephones already owned by Top Grade. "Having been a Toshiba customer for more than 10 years, we still had a lot of Toshiba telephones that were in good working condition. We were able to reduce the costs by using the telephones and adding new ones just where it made the most sense."

Toshiba's Report Card Shows All "A's"

Gehrke reports that the Toshiba Strata CS has provided Top Grade with a superior business communication system that has improved productivity and efficiency for everyone at the company, while contributing to the bottom line.

"Important calls get through to a live person, whether it's our operator or via the follow-me capability, which definitely means customers and potential customers are getting the service they need and want. This translates to an improvement in our ability to get new business and service our existing customers," he mentioned.

"After all, when your telephones are your livelihood, it's important to have a telephone system that makes the grade. Toshiba's Strata CS definitely gets an A+ from Top Grade Construction," Gehrke summed up.