



CALLING UP BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE

YORKSHIRE BASED PARTNER LOCAL TELECOM SERVICE COMPLETES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL INSTALLATION OF PANASONIC PBX SYSTEM IN KÄTHE WOHLFAHRT'S FIRST UK OUTLET IN YORK.

Käthe Wohlfahrt



For any business, effective communications systems are often mission-critical. Often taken for granted, such systems are soon missed when there are issues and problems, affecting the ability to do business properly and to provide the high level of service customers expect.

Panasonic Focus Dealer Local Telecom Services has been supplying and supporting businesses since 1985.

The family-run company was recently contracted to install and provide ongoing support for a Panasonic KX-NS700 hybrid phone system alongside six KX-NT551 and one KX-NT553 handset for the first UK branch of Käthe Wohlfahrt.

The chain is a German Christmas shop with outlets in a number of German and European cities as well as in Japan, the USA and Canada.

Designed specifically for small and medium sized businesses the KX-NS700 system offers a significant amount of flexibility for companies with up to 250 users in a single site. A built-in web server allows maintenance to take place remotely, with installers being able to easily program everything related to functions of the phone and voicemail system.

The KX-NS700 also offers built-in applications including an advanced call routing solution without the need for an external server.

The York installation comprises two phones on the shop floor connected to two in the manager's office upstairs, one in the staff room and an additional phone in another upstairs office. The system allows Käthe Wohlfahrt staff to painlessly answer, transfer and record calls to the shop as well as communicate internally within the shop itself.

"Panasonic has backwards compatibility built into their systems, which means you can combine handset hardware of different ages together. A lot of other manufacturers don't offer that"

The previous occupier of the site on Stonegate in the centre of York were Mulberry Hall, well known in the city amongst residents and tourists alike, as it traded for nearly 60 years as a fine china specialist. They had been a customer of LTS for over 25 years.

Dating from 1434, the historically sensitive 2,800 square foot Mulberry Hall premises meant LTS had to be extremely cautious about any changes they made inside the building, as many parts are Grade I listed. Even relatively minor works potentially contravene planning and protection regulations.

However, being based in a historic city, LTS engineers have become extremely adept at working within every possible type of building, from modern office blocks right through to listed buildings that are hundreds of years old.

The company's continued success has come about through staying close to what they know, largely remaining a Yorkshire-based business and therefore ensuring they are in a position to respond quickly to customer issues.

"We used to work with a number of different manufacturers, but Panasonic systems are by far the most reliable we've installed"

The building's listing required LTS to consult with local architects with an in-depth knowledge of planning and listing regulations, but it was at the opening of the new shop in May 2016 that the company realised all the local companies involved was by coincidence an LTS, and, by extension, Panasonic customer.

"The architect, electrical contractor, building contractor, alarm company and insurance broker involved in splitting the old shop into three units are all by coincidence LTS and Panasonic customers, which we think is quite an achievement and a testament not only to what we offer but also to the quality of Panasonic systems," said Director Mark Mills, who runs the business alongside his wife Sarah.

"We used to sell a number of other manufacturers' systems before moving to Panasonic exclusively, and while they would have a nice appearance for the first couple of years they would actually begin to fade after a while due to the low quality plastic used, and faults on the systems were more common. Meanwhile we have customers with Panasonic hardware that is ten or even fifteen years old, used every day and still running perfectly. The quality of Panasonic systems is good and they're extremely reliable."

"While Panasonic may not be the first to immediately adopt the latest new features we tend to find it's because Panasonic holds back a little bit, to see how it works and to make sure it actually benefits users before they launch it. They are more cautious about making major changes in case it impairs the product. Lots of other manufacturers don't, and we have always found users have a lot more issues with those systems," continued Mark Mills.

"Everyone involved in the build were LTS and Panasonic customers, which we think is testament not only to what we offer but also to the quality of Panasonic systems"

The preserved historic streets of York city centre means Internet speeds are limited to the capacity on existing phone lines, with no dedicated fibre optic cabling. As a result the Mulberry Hall installation could not use SIP so the analogue lines were incorporated with digital phones.

"Other companies will support a product for 3-5 years and then beyond that you have to update to the latest product to continue getting the support. Panasonic has backwards compatibility built into their systems, which means you can combine handset hardware of different ages together in the same system."

"A lot of other manufacturers don't offer that, and so customers get left behind and have to upgrade completely. When businesses are making a big investment in a phone system they really appreciate that flexibility," continued Mark Mills.

"There's a lot of co-operation between dealers and Panasonic - Panasonic is always open to our ideas and we'll suggest things and be vocal about what issues we're having and they'll take it on board. It's very much a two-way conversation which is excellent. It shows they value us."

"We're very happy with the new phone system and it has helped us settle into our new premises very nicely," said Pam Boulton, Accounts Manager at Käthe Wohlfahrt York. "The system lets us do everything we need and route calls to where they need to be. It's good to keep things local and having LTS only down the road is very useful if we ever need the support."

