GOVIT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT & SYMPOSIUM

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# How a Brand-New CIO Modernized a City's Communications Without an IT Department

**Ed Miranda**

Chief Information Officer, City of Newark

**Andrew Williamson**

Senior Technology Advisor, Maverick Networks

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# The mission we inherited

Modernization had to happen while the IT organization was still being built

### THEN

- 1 technician
- No IT department
- Legacy communications
- Multiple vendor dependencies
- Reliability issues
- Limited internal capacity

### THE MISSION

**Modernize communications while building the team that would own it.**

### NOW

- Lean internal IT capability
- Modern UCaaS
- Direct carrier relationships
- Redundancy and failover
- Better operational visibility

# Why communications became the first target

It was not just expensive. It was expensive, fragile, and mission-critical

1

### Cost pressure

One provider handled telephony, circuits, and wide area connectivity

2

### Reliability

Outages we could not see into, and could not fix ourselves

3

### Complexity

Every change routed through a middleman

4

### Lean-team reality

A small department had to be able to run it day to day

THE DECISION LENS

**Fix the thing that creates meaningful risk, consumes meaningful budget, and is difficult for a small team to operate.**

# Procurement strategy: separate the problem

Two RFPs made real comparison possible and reduced bundling pressure

## Telecommunications System RFP

The phone platform itself

**12 proposals received**

## Telecommunications Carrier Services RFP

The circuits underneath it

**7 proposals received**

Both issued November 2023, due December 2023

ClientFirst assisted with requirements development

Incumbent cost baseline not disclosed

# Evaluation without the noise

Separate technical fit from price pressure, then bring stakeholders into the decision

**Technical evaluation**

**Stakeholder demos**

**Cost proposal**

## Scored by the departments that would live with the decision

- Recreation and Community Services
- Community Development
- Information Technology
- Finance
- Police
- City Manager's Office
- Human Resources

# You are the CIO

Tiny team. High expectations. Which matters most?

- **A** Lowest price
- **B** Most features
- **C** Easiest administration
- **D** Highest reliability

# You are the CIO

This is where Newark landed, and why

A Lowest price

B Most features

**C Easiest administration**

D Highest reliability

***The best system is not necessarily the one with the most capabilities.***
***It is the one your organization can actually operate.***

# Partner role: capacity, not accountability

Good consultants expand government capacity. They do not replace government accountability

The city owns

**The decision, the risk, and the accountability**

The partner expands

**Execution capacity around an already-stretched team**

# Labor Day cutover

A staged migration kept the team focused on service continuity

**THURSDAY**

## First sites

Fire stations, Senior Center and Community Center

**FRIDAY–MONDAY**

## Major City sites

Handsets, configuration and number ports

**THROUGHOUT**

## Validation

Call flows, published numbers and site readiness

**TUESDAY**

## Staff return

Employees resumed work with the new system

**Public safety and critical services had to remain available.**

# Was there any downtime?

Preparation is what turns a cutover weekend into a non-event

Temporary numbers carried calls while ports completed

**Continuity, not cutoff**

Once a port completed, the real number moved over in

**Minutes, not hours**

## The preparation behind it

1

### Know your numbers

Newark knew what every number did and kept every one of them

2

### Protect published contacts

No department had to reprint, rewrite, or update a website

3

### Sequence the porting

Ports ran in waves, with temporary numbers carrying calls

# Protecting public safety and continuity

911 emergency lines remained separate from RingCentral

**BEFORE**

- One managed provider for everything
- No direct carrier relationship
- Outages measured in days, not hours

**AFTER**

- Direct relationships with AT&T and Comcast
- Dual-carrier design with in-house failover
- The City can see and fix its own problems

# Copper is being retired

Newark got 30 days. Other retirement notices may allow more time. Inventory early

1

### The letters are going out

Cities, utilities and school districts are getting retirement notices with dated deadlines.

2

### The rules are changing

Carrier-of-last-resort rules and copper-retirement practices are changing.

3

### Lead time beats crisis

An agency that has inventoried its analog lines gets to plan. One that has not gets a countdown.

## Start your inventory before someone else sets your deadline

Emergency lines · Elevator lines · Alarm panels · Fax lines · Analog dependencies · Carrier circuits

*Know what each line does and who depends on it, before the notice arrives.*

# What we actually moved

A citywide phone migration is much more than desk phones

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **276** users and accounts | **190** physical phones | **18** City sites | **31** active call queues |
| **40** IVR trees | **33** message-only accounts | **9** announcement-only accounts | **3** paging systems |

*Also in the environment: analog adapters, conference-room devices, and legacy services handled separately.*

# Adoption: why the phones mattered

Sometimes the physical change tells employees this is different

### The old system

Features existed. Most users only ever knew the basics, because training never happened.

### The training plan

Focused on what staff actually do every day, and communicated before the cutover.

### New handsets

The old devices could have worked. New handsets signaled a genuine fresh start.

**Very few post-go-live questions, which reinforced the value of communication and training.**

# Results: what changed

The savings came from redesigning the environment, not from one contract

**$253,947**

Previous annual communications cost

**$152,248**

New annual recurring cost

**$101,699**

Annual savings, about 40 percent

**$38,980**

One-time implementation and consulting

**4.6 months**

Approximate payback

**2024**

PTI Solutions Award

# Five things I'd tell a new CIO

Based on the lessons learned, and what I would do differently next time

1. **Inventory before you modernize.**
   Know the contracts, numbers, lines, locations and dependencies.
2. **Separate requirements from solutions.**
   Do not let the incumbent architecture define the RFP.
3. **Bring users into the design.**
   Especially call queues, workflows and departmental messaging.
4. **Protect the transition, not just the destination.**
   Porting, legacy lines, incumbent services and fallback all matter.
5. **Optimize for operational simplicity.**
   The cheapest license model is not always the lowest operating cost.

# Thank you

Questions and discussion

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**Session resources**

mavericknetworks.net/govit-2026-resources