

FUTURE VOICE DELIVERS MULTI-FACETED TELEPHONY SOLUTION FOR BLACKBURN ROVERS

The Customer

Established in 1875, Blackburn Rovers is one of the English Football League's founding members.

Currently sitting in the Championship, and employing approximately 750 staff, the football club has economically diversified their business interests to include, ticketing, retail, memberships, hospitality, sponsorships, education, and community engagement, as well as a CAT 1 graded Academy and a successful ladies' team.



THE CHALLENGE

Blackburn Rovers was previously using a legacy PBX solution, consisting of three separate Mitel platforms for various aspects of the organisation.

Not only did this complicate the management and maintenance of the entire telephony estate, but as part of his plans to modernise the club's IT infrastructure, Kieran Shellard, Rovers' IT Manager, knew it was time for the system to be upgraded, as it was limited to physical handsets on desks, with no hybrid working functionality.

Not only was it running on ISDN 30 lines – with the entire 'landline' network planned to be deactivated by the end of 2025 – but it didn't provide the modern features or flexibility that businesses need in the new working world of hybrid working and digital commerce.

“We wanted a solution that could help us better personalise the experience for our callers – things like caller ID recognition, which go a long way to making callers feel part of the club.”

Kieran Shellard, IT Manager, Blackburn Rovers

Furthermore, the platform they were using could only report on specific metrics to gauge the team's performance. And looking even deeper into its network, Kieran wanted to portion off segments of bandwidth to ensure any of Rovers' commercial partners that had established offices on-site, could have complete data privacy and vice versa.

Kieran spent nearly a year researching and exploring the various options available before the pandemic paused the project. However, given the necessity to modernise the business's operations, Kieran had to implement a solution quickly once the lockdowns were lifted.

Even beating some of the world's largest vendors for the contract, Future Voice won the tender off the back of the quality of replies to Kieran's questions – even before any contract had been agreed upon or signed.

“There are so many telecoms businesses out there selling the same or similar ‘flavour’ of products... Over that sort of year period of scoping out the solution, if I asked Future Voice a question, they would find the answer, despite no guarantee that they would ever win the business because it ultimately wasn't my decision.”

Kieran Shellard, IT Manager, Blackburn Rovers



THE SOLUTION

“While it was frustrating from my point of view, especially one of the vendor’s lack of project management after a change in account manager, Future Voice couldn’t have done more to support us, and ensure we kept to the deadline set.”

**Kieran Shellard, IT Manager,
Blackburn Rovers**

Future Voice recommended a mixture of Avaya Cloud Office by Ring Central for the majority of ‘Back of House’ staff, while deploying NICE’s CXone/Ring Central Contact Centre for agents in the call centre that covered ticketing, retail, support, membership and hospitality operations.

This would ensure Rovers could deploy a custom IVR to optimise caller experience and enable agents to check callers’ IDs to raise customer information to further enhance their interactions.

A Leased Line and separate Avaya Cloud Office systems were also suggested for Rovers Trust, a Community Benefit Society, that operates within the grounds while acting as a separate and impartial entity from the Football Club.

However, the business needed to get the new solution up and online before the start of the upcoming season’s season ticket launch. Not long into the process, the agreed-upon actions of vendors missed deadlines, and mistakes were spotted in the contract between one of the vendors and Rovers.

Future Voice’s Operations Director, Mark Darby took it upon himself to act as the go-between and ensure the vendors kept to their schedules, everything stayed on track, and all information included within the BRD was implemented as expected.

The solution also included an Avaya IP office solution that was intended as a failover in case of a catastrophic power or technology failure. This critical “matchday system” included 50 handsets spread across the grounds, separately powered with their own back-up power supply, to ensure officials, stewards, members of the public could all maintain contact with the operations room, in case of an emergency.

Given the detrimental effect of a technology or telecoms outage on matchdays, Future Voice also provided a bespoke support package that provided Rovers with priority support on match days, in case of any issues that could affect the fan experience.

THE RESULTS

Modernising Blackburn Rovers' telephony system has already provided broad benefits to the organisation.

The new solution is 100% futureproof from the 2025 Switch Off, ensuring a consistent internal and external experience over the next few years. Conversely, late may have to urgently upgrade systems before the 2023 and 2025 deadlines.

Rover's teams can now work from home just as productively as from the office, taking calls on their laptops and mobile phones, as well as accessing files and collaborating on group video calls.

While cost-cutting was never the goal, Rovers' new solution is, in fact, reducing costs while also helping the call centre team deliver some amazing results!



Over and above the typical benefits of a modern Unified Communications solution, the club is already evolving the caller experience and has even more plans for future enhancements.

"We're now able to identify the caller so agents can see the reason for them calling in advance, greet them warmly and treat them like part of the Rovers family. We're already well on the way, and once we adopt some other additional features, we'll have the solution we always dreamed of!"

Kieran Shellard, IT Manager, Blackburn Rovers
