

# Law firm discovers new-found efficiencies for its nationwide offices with an IP convergence solution from Bell.

When McCarthy Tétrault decided to move its Montréal office operations in 2006, the law firm saw an opportunity to rethink its telecommunications strategy. In developing a support structure for its new office, the firm quickly realized that by adopting a centralized enterprise approach it would then be able to consolidate and standardize its telecommunications management across all locations. Working with Bell, McCarthy Tétrault built an enterprise-wide IP-based communications infrastructure that has improved efficiencies and simplified management of IT resources.

## About McCarthy Tétrault

McCarthy Tétrault is a leading Canadian law firm that specializes in integrated business law, litigation services, tax law, real property law, labour and employment law, nationally and globally. The firm has 700 lawyers practicing out of its six Canadian offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal and Québec City, plus an office in London UK.

## The challenge: an infrastructure of many parts

For many years McCarthy Tétrault had been working with a dated telecommunications infrastructure that had become more fragmented over time. Since each office had been responsible for its own telecommunications needs, there were variations in the ages and types of equipment used at each site. Depending on the location, offices also had different telecom suppliers for their telephone systems.

“For a considerable time, they had been managing their phone systems locally,” explains Thomas Oakes, Senior Director of IT for McCarthy Tétrault.

During a Y2K initiative, firmware upgrades were made to the office systems that provided some consistency. Four of the largest offices had voicemail systems that used older telephone equipment, while two smaller offices operated on isolated systems that were based on different technology.

When McCarthy Tétrault was getting ready to move to its new Montréal I office in 2006, Oakes said the time had come to reconsider its approach to telecommunications. “We knew we could realize a great benefit from restructuring our voice and data services. Because Montréal was one of our largest offices, and the move involved replacing all of the existing telecommunications equipment, it provided the ideal opportunity to consolidate voice and data services onto a single network.

## The solution: creating a greater whole with IP convergence

When starting the move, one objective was to pre-install as much new telephone equipment as possible. “Replacing the telephone system precipitated the entire project,” says Oakes. “We realized we should build something on an enterprise level and not revert to the local office systems we used in the past.”

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“With an IP-based telecommunications strategy, our internal users have communications tools that are easier and more intuitive so they can be more responsive to their customers. It has also made the job of IT management much easier.”

– Thomas Oakes  
Senior Director of IT, McCarthy Tétrault

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After defining requirements and assessing vendor offerings, the decision was made to use the IP VPN service from Bell, a private IP-based wide area network (WAN) solution. "We wanted to redesign our WAN and implement the Bell system so we would be ready to support voice over IP (VoIP)," says Oakes. "All of this had to be done before the move took place."

As an enterprise solution, the project required centralizing much of the support technology in Toronto. Once that support structure was in place, in March 2006 the firm was ready to deploy the new VoIP-based phone and voicemail systems.

Following some initial adjustments and training users on the new phone systems, McCarthy Tétraut started a phased rollout of the system to its other offices. Telecommunications equipment was replaced at each site and the old PBX systems removed. Now that national rollout is completed, the IP VPN service interconnects all six offices to allow for centralized management.

According to Oakes, this interconnectivity offers a number of advantages. "Now we have a sophisticated, centralized platform we can work on to build new applications."

Among other benefits, the IP-based system allows for direct dialing among all offices using six-digit extensions. Even getting to technical support is easier. "It's all transparent to the user," says Oakes. "Rather than going through complex menus to stream calls, they only have to dial a six-digit extension."

Each phone includes a firm-wide directory and touch-screen capabilities to enable easy connectivity, while the new unified messaging system integrates voice and email messages into a common mailbox for improved access.

"By providing a communication tool that is easier and more intuitive to use, we deliver more value to our

internal users," says Oakes. For example, lawyers are more responsive to clients since they receive messages much more quickly (within one minute of it being recorded). Plans are also in the works to extend the unified messaging capability to PDA devices.

The system also delivers a number of back-end benefits that aren't visible to the everyday user he adds. "Centralized management allows us to control costs, consolidate resources and reduce the complexity in the amount of equipment we need. It has also allowed us to centralize skills needed to support IP telephony, so we can be so much more effective when servicing our internal users. Now a technical support person can service a user in Calgary as easily as one in Vancouver or Toronto."

### **Bell: experience matters**

Oakes says that when looking for a solution provider, "Bell provided everything we asked for, and they also brought a number of value added services to the table. They have a lot of depth in terms of knowing both technical and business processes."

Oakes adds that coverage was also a key factor in the decision. "When you have a national WAN supporting an enterprise IP telephony system you want national coverage – and Bell could offer very good service to areas where a majority of our users are located."

Throughout the project Bell provided the technology, design services, installation of core components and technical support. It continues to provide professional services for upgrades and other requirements as the system evolves. McCarthy Tétraut is also working with Bell to select UK-based partners to bring its London office onto the new system.

According to Oakes, with the infrastructure in place, it has only scratched the surface of what an IP-based system can bring. "We're continuing to explore new opportunities with Bell. There's a lot more that can be done."

For more information contact your Bell representative, Bell Certified Partner or visit [bell.ca/IP](http://bell.ca/IP)

