



Colorado Springs Sky Sox Baseball

stories of
SUCCESS



Microsoft Hosted Exchange helps pro baseball team stay in the game

CenturyLink solutions help the Colorado Springs Sky Sox collaborate, communicate, and compete more efficiently.

The Colorado Springs Sky Sox are the Triple-A affiliate of Major League Baseball's Colorado Rockies and play in the Pacific Coast League (PCL). The organization has competed at the Triple-A level in Colorado Springs for 26 seasons. The team plays in an 8,500 seat ballpark and was awarded Bob Frietas Triple-A Organization of the Year courtesy of Baseball America in 2011.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

INDUSTRY:

Professional
Baseball

CHALLENGE:

Minor League baseball club struggled with accessing and coordinating essential business functions due to obsolete IT environment

BENEFITS:

- Multi-platform accessibility to essential documents and information
- Enhanced internal collaboration and external communications
- Improved Internet service reliability and uptime
- A responsive world-class support network

SOLUTION:

Microsoft Hosted Exchange and CenturyLink high-speed fiber Internet connects business and baseball operations personnel through multi-platform email access, real-time calendar syncing, and reliable Internet connectivity



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— Mike Hobson —

*Assistant General Manager
Colorado Springs Sky Sox*

CHALLENGE

As a professional baseball team, on-field performance is everything to the Colorado Springs Sky Sox. But organizational success at this level is more than just turning a double play or hitting a game-winning home run.

For years, the organization had been content with simple email, phone and Internet services to support its daily business operations. However, as the quantity of non-baseball business activities—concerts, weddings, on-field “fun-runs,” and other occasions—increased alongside its popular on-field product, so too did the need for better integration of its technologies, more reliable service, and simplified collaboration for its employees. The organization’s legacy email server and T1 lines for Internet services could no longer support the team’s 30 employees effectively and had begun to adversely affect the team’s operations.

“We have a modern, increasingly mobile operations staff that needs to be able to communicate and coordinate from any place, at any time,” says Mike Hobson, assistant general manager of the Sky Sox. “We needed a cost-effective, all-in-one collaboration and productivity solution that reflected our borderless office work environment.”

SOLUTION

After a cursory evaluation of several options from other vendors, Hobson selected an all-inclusive solution pairing hosted email solutions with connectivity and telecommunications infrastructure from CenturyLink. Unlike other vendors that could only provide a service or two at a time, the vertically integrated CenturyLink relationship offers a complete, end-to-end solution with a single point of contact.

The organization replaced its slow, outdated POP3 email server with 31 premium-service licenses for Microsoft Hosted Exchange and one license for BlackBerry Enterprise Server 5.0 SP4 for Microsoft Exchange from CenturyLink. The cloud-based, hosted solution provides a faster, more reliable, and scalable email and communications infrastructure, helping employees stay

connected and productive while both in and out of the office.

In the past, Hobson and his staff had to rely on text messages, voice mails or emails to coordinate meetings and sales activities in real time. “It was challenging to keep everyone on the same page because details were always communicated in different message formats at different times,” he says. “On more than a few occasions we had to rearrange meetings or important sales calls because we simply couldn’t coordinate as efficiently as we wanted.”

The CenturyLink solution automatically syncs employees’ calendars and emails across devices in real time, providing immediate access to important communications and appointments and helping to dramatically improve productivity. Now, employees can send notes and ideas together in a single message that can be read from any mobile or desktop device, which has centralized communications on one organized platform.

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In addition to implementing an efficient, cloud-based email system, the Sky Sox also chose to replace the 3MB bonded T1 line it had been running for its Internet connectivity with CenturyLink fiber optic service. Bandwidth and speeds delivered with the legacy system were insufficient for supporting day-to-day operational needs across the organization.

The Sky Sox worked with engineers and migration specialists from CenturyLink to overhaul its existing telecommunications environment, including repairing a damaged conduit that threatened to derail the upgrade. The team deployed



fiber optic Internet, a PRI T1 to support phone service, ISDN lines for the broadcast booths, and a market expansion line that provides residents in neighboring cities a local number to call for easier access to tickets. The local contact number is an important, but overlooked strategic tool that Hobson had planned to implement down the road. He expects it to help increase the team's ticket sales and generate additional fan interest in surrounding areas.

"We knew at some point that other parts of our infrastructure would need to be upgraded along with our email system," Hobson says. "Luckily, CenturyLink was able to offer an integrated solution that met all of our business needs at once and still fit within our budget."

BENEFITS

With unified solutions from CenturyLink, the Sky Sox have enhanced Internet connectivity, more reliable and stable email hosting, and integrated digital and analog voice services in a single solution. The new, modernized infrastructure has streamlined the organization's daily operations to better serve its employees, business partners and fans.

Similar projects often take four months or longer to complete because of the number of solutions to be deployed and the careful consideration required to avoid service interruption for employees. Complicating matters further, the Sky Sox discovered a damaged conduit coming into the stadium that could have added weeks and thousands of dollars to the project's timeline and budget. The Sky Sox and CenturyLink team members worked closely to plan the extensive implementation.

"There were complexities that could have completely derailed the entire plan," Hobson says. "The CenturyLink team were in constant communication with us, which helped us complete the entire implementation in just two months with virtually zero adverse impact on our employees' daily activities."

The faster, more reliable Internet means that ticket sales, group sales and other mission-critical services can continue uninterrupted. In addition, the feature-rich, cloud-based email

system gives Hobson and his employees instant, reliable access to essential documents and information across all platforms, at any time, from virtually anywhere.

As the assistant General Manager, Hobson wears many hats. Without a dedicated IT staff to manage the daily technological operations, it's important for him to be able to balance his strategic role as an organizational leader with his other roles which include oversight of the organization's technology and communications systems. The centralized CenturyLink Management Console for Microsoft Hosted Exchange alleviates some of the burden by letting Hobson add or remove users and manage email account settings on the fly for a seamless transition for his employees.

"I can set aliases, away messages and change other settings our employees need to do their jobs the best they can in just a few clicks of a mouse," he says. "With real-time connectivity we can be more agile, solve problems faster and pursue new business relationships more confidently."

Perhaps the greatest benefit, however, has been the level of professional support and single account management point of contact Hobson enjoys with CenturyLink. Unlike other vendors, the CenturyLink environment is managed by one entity meaning Hobson no longer has to contact a different provider or support technician for each part of his organization's technology environment.

The unified solution is valuable for the Sky Sox because it translates to faster problem resolution and decision making without additional costs or delays. A dedicated representative, supported immediately by a team of experts, is available to answer questions, quickly recruit resources for systems maintenance, and help plan for future projects.

"With CenturyLink, we get the best of everything," Hobson says. "No one else can deliver a quality all-in-one solution with world-class support at such a reasonable price."



- Microsoft Hosted Exchange – 30 seats, Premium Service
- BlackBerry Enterprise Server 5.0 SP4 for Microsoft Exchange - 1 seat
- FastForward OnboardingSM, Guided Activation

- CenturyLink High Speed Internet
- CenturyLink PRI T1
- CenturyLink ISDN

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CenturyLink offers a simple and affordable path to enterprise-level business applications, development platforms, and cloud server and storage infrastructure. You get the efficiency, cost-savings and security benefits of cloud technology, all from a single provider. And it's backed by the technology and reputation of CenturyLink, the nation's third-largest communications provider.

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