GoTo

SUCCESS STORY:
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA

GoToConnect
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Saint Mary's College of California was founded in 1863 and is one of the oldest schools in the West to educate the children of early San Francisco's working class. The College's community is centered on a set of beliefs. They believe that conversations, focused on essential questions and classic texts, foster critical thinking and ignite a lifelong passion for learning. They believe their approach to teaching, scholarship and service transforms society and themselves. Finally, they believe that the essential human dialogue between faith and reason nurtures each person along a spiritual journey.

CHALLENGE

COVID-19 took the world by surprise, leaving organizations scrambling to keep the lights on and enable their staff to continue working. This was especially true for organizations in the state of California, like Saint Mary's College of California, when stay-at-home regulations were suddenly put in place. At a moment's notice, all students, faculty, and staff were required to shift to fully remote learning and work. This is easier said than done for an organization whose core processes and inner workings were built on the requirement of being in-person.

When the stay-at-home order was enacted, admissions staff suddenly had no physical phones to use for answering or placing calls. The student support staff did not have access to traditional fax machines to handle sensitive student information. Additionally, students were prohibited from entering their dorm rooms and didn't know if and when they could collect their belongings after the holiday break. Saint Mary's needed a solution for secure internal and external communications that would work for their now distributed work force.

SOLUTION

The good news is that a few years before the pandemic struck, Saint Mary's had swapped out their aging phone system for GoToConnect. The school staff, however, continued to utilize their desk phones and fax machines that they were accustomed to and familiar with. The staff's reluctance to embrace the new system caused increased disruption and confusion when the stay-at-home order was enacted. Luckily, Saint Mary's Manager of IT Networks, Lawrence Altomare, was primed and ready to support the school's staff in quickly making the switch. "The staff was very comfortable with the traditional desk phone. They were not ready to use GoToConnect's advanced features like call routing. COVID was what forced all those modern functions to be put into place," he said.

One of the first initial hurdles to face was communicating with students and their parents. The stay-at-home order went into place shortly after a holiday break, causing chaos and confusion around if and when students could collect their belongings still in their dorm rooms. GoToConnect enabled Altomare to quickly and easily set up a call center to field incoming calls from the approximately 1,200 students affected. "We had all these people calling, which would have overwhelmed the system under our traditional PBX. I explained, 'We have to build a call center immediately. Give me a few hours and I'll have it built.' The beauty of the GoToConnect system is that you can figure it out. We don't have to spend thousands of dollars on phone upgrades. We just needed to change the call flow," he said.

Additionally, Altomare needed to set up office staff with the ability to fax remotely. Faxing is the method of choice for sharing sensitive student information in a safe and secure manner. With GoToConnect's virtual fax feature, staff are no longer bound to the office and traditional fax machines and they can now send and receive faxes from wherever they are. "All of a sudden, everyone is very interested, and I've been configuring a lot of fax gateways. They'll follow the instructions, and the fax will go out — it just works," explained Altomare.

Finally, Altomare was challenged with arranging a student-run call center within the School of Education. Students working there needed to answer incoming phone calls and field inquiries. The shift to remote working and using personal cell phones introduced new requirements for a secure and efficient system that would work from anywhere. GoToConnect helped with the establishment of a call center, greetings, call routing, and even caller ID so students wouldn't need to worry about exposing their personal phone numbers when on phone calls on behalf of the school. "When the call comes in, I'll change the caller ID to say School of Education. It will make the student look very professional, very seamless. And even though they've been doing this for a few hours, they'll look like this is something they know very well. That's the power of GoToConnect," said Altomare.

RESULTS

Despite a rocky start, the end results speak for themselves. Not only has Saint Mary's College of California saved money over their previous PBX system, more importantly, they can also continue their mission critical work of preparing students for their chosen careers and for their lives ahead. Once the staff better understood how GoToConnect's features such as call forwarding, call greetings, and virtual fax worked, they were very accepting of the changes and have taken and run with them.

No matter what comes next, Altomare is convinced that they are well prepared. "Sometimes you don't know what you're going to need. You may have an event come up and you have new requirements. With GoToConnect, people will come to me and ask if we can handle this or that. And the answer is almost always yes."
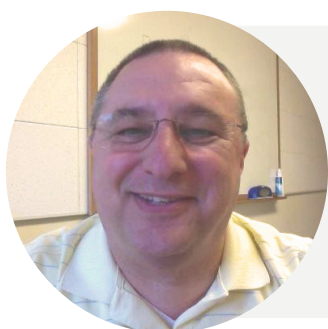
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>
> **– Lawrence Altomare,** Manager, IT Networks, Saint Mary's College of California

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