



# AUSTAR ENHANCES CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION AND SERVICE WITH AAPT



“AAPT has provided us with a robust, fully redundant national communications infrastructure that ensures we can continue to provide exceptional customer service in our national call centre.”

Phil Blackwell, GENERAL MANAGER, TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATIONS, AUSTAR

## 1 BUSINESS CHALLENGE

AUSTAR is the largest pay TV operator in Australia, offering mobile phone and Internet services through its subsidiaries AUSTAR Mobile, AUSTARnet and AUSTAR Broadband.

At the heart of the company's operations is its 350-seat call centre which services 750,000 AUSTAR customers and receives up to 2,000 inbound calls every day.

Without a robust disaster recovery plan for the call centre's Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)-based phone systems, AUSTAR's call centre averaged as many as four costly outages a year between 2006 and 2009.

“SIP is a signalling protocol that sets up communications sessions on a company's network,” says Phil Blackwell, General Manager, Technology and Operations at AUSTAR. “These sessions can include everything from simple phone calls to multi-location, multimedia conferences.

“When the SIP-based phone systems went down, customer service suffered. We needed to improve the reliability of our call centre service in a way that didn't disrupt service or require massive investment in new systems.”

To continue providing seamless call centre service to its customers, AUSTAR also wanted to upgrade its IP-based virtual private network (VPN) and wide area network (WAN) infrastructure.

## 2 SOLUTION FEATURES

In 2010, AUSTAR chose a bespoke communications infrastructure solution built around AAPT SIP Voice. Developed collaboratively by AUSTAR and AAPT over several months, the new infrastructure encompassed WAN, Internet and SIP technologies. This included a 300Mbps protected inter-capital e-Line Ethernet service, dual 100Mbps trunk accesses into AUSTAR's head office in Sydney and its call centre on the Gold Coast, as well as a triangulated 10Mbps service from both offices to Foxtel.

### 1. Robust call centre redundancy

If the primary 100Mbps into either office fails, the active calls re-route via the other dual 100Mbps link without loss of service. If both of the Gold Coast call centre external accesses go offline, AUSTAR can take calls from the Sydney office and re-route them back to the Gold Coast call centre via the company's WAN. If both locations go down, calls can still be routed to each office using backup ISDN lines, effectively offering five levels of redundancy.

### 2. Adaptable SIP Voice service

AAPT experts made it easy for AUSTAR to tailor SIP Voice to accommodate AUSTAR's specific business needs. This included Interactive Voice Response (IVR), a technology AUSTAR has used to classify and resolve around 65 per cent of incoming customer calls.

### 3. Quick to market

Despite the size of the project – which was spread over two states, required changes to AUSTAR's existing infrastructure and involved a large amount of testing – AAPT rolled out the new solution quickly. AUSTAR started working with AAPT in January 2010 and by early April the new system was fully operational.

### 4. Links to CRM and other applications

AAPT's solution integrated smoothly with AUSTAR's existing CRM, IVR and other customer-focused applications, enabling the pay TV provider to maintain its reputation for excellent customer service.

### 5. Easier management with all-in-one provider

AUSTAR's previous communications infrastructure was a difficult-to-manage mix of products from various providers. It now has an end-to-end solution with all systems hosted on AAPT's carrier infrastructure.

### 6. Competitive price

AAPT offered AUSTAR a cost-efficient solution supported by professional and expert service.

# OUTAGES A THING OF THE PAST, AUSTAR IS READY FOR THE FUTURE

“AAPT is one of the leading suppliers I’ve worked with. They know how to listen and negotiate, they are very flexible, and their speed at fixing problems and ability to make changes on the spot has been excellent.”

Phil Blackwell, GENERAL MANAGER, TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATIONS, AUSTAR

## AAPT’S SIP VOICE INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTION

### 3 THE RESULT

Since moving its telecommunications infrastructure to AAPT, AUSTAR has not suffered any costly downtime. “With the old carrier, we would have had three or four outages a year,” says Blackwell.

“So far we have not had one outage that has anything to do with infrastructure or carrier connectivity.”

“The main advantage is that we are now secure from a disaster recovery, failover and operational perspective,” he says. “I simply have less to worry about on that side of our operations now, which gives our Technology team more time to spend developing new, better services for our customers and focusing on projects that will help grow our business.”

#### An end-to-end solution

AUSTAR’s main goal was to make managing its communications infrastructure easier by adopting an end-to-end solution from a single provider – something only AAPT could provide.

“We didn’t want to get our WAN from one provider and receive our calls from another. In a SIP environment it is really important the calls and infrastructure come from a single carrier,” says Blackwell.

AUSTAR’s new SIP solution means instead of incoming customer calls reaching the company’s call centre via multiple carriers, AAPT consolidates all connections. This improves connectivity and redundancy while streamlining operations and reducing costs.

“AAPT provided us with a SIP-based communications infrastructure that is physically and logically redundant, geographically diverse and operates

end-to-end on AAPT’s own infrastructure, which means we can pass the savings we gain from lower system management costs on to our customers,” Blackwell says.

#### Flexible, attentive service

AUSTAR was impressed with the adaptable, expert service AAPT provided. “When you take as many as 2,000 calls a day, you’ve got to make sure all the interconnected systems work properly,” says Blackwell. “We have to ensure every incoming call has the right audio format, the right codec, and is directed to the right place in the call centre so the customer’s query is dealt with correctly.”

AAPT engineers worked onsite at AUSTAR for the duration of the project, customising

the solution to fit the pay TV provider’s business-specific requirements.

“AAPT is one of the leading suppliers I’ve worked with,” Blackwell adds. “They know how to listen and negotiate. They are very flexible and their speed at fixing problems and ability to make changes on the spot is amazing. If we need something, like ramping up system performance, they’re quick to jump in and help us out.”

#### Future plans

Blackwell is confident AUSTAR now has a communications infrastructure that it can build upon for the future. “We’re looking to deliver more entertainment content to phones and other platforms, such as TVs and IP set-top boxes.”

### OVERVIEW

**AUSTAR** moved to a SIP telephony-based communications infrastructure in 2006 but over time the service provided by its telecommunications carrier became unreliable.

**AUSTAR** chose a bespoke communications infrastructure solution built around **AAPT’s SIP Voice** offering, featuring data and IP solutions that **AUSTAR and AAPT** developed collaboratively over several months.

**AUSTAR** believed having one carrier deliver network infrastructure and telephony services for its business – with the appropriate SLAs – was essential.

Since upgrading its **IP-based VPN and WAN infrastructure**, as well as the capabilities of its customer-related applications, **AUSTAR** has suffered no outages and continues to expand its customer service capabilities.

### CHALLENGES:

- **Unreliable infrastructure** – several call centre outages each year
- **Mix-and-match solution from multiple providers** – telephony and network infrastructure from different suppliers.
- High level of systems and relationship management
- **Unable to scale infrastructure** to meet customer demand

### SUCCESES:

- **No infrastructure**-related downtime
- **Competitive price**
- **End-to-end systems** from one provider
- **Improved customer service**