

# Curve



## Customer

- Curve, United Kingdom

## Industry

- Hospitality & Leisure

## Challenges

- Innovative theatre design
- Desire for leading edge communications
- Integration of information and communication systems required

## Solution

- UNIVERGE Sphericall
- Platform architecture based on Service Oriented Communications(SOC)
- Multimedia Contact centre with integration to business applications
- IP wireless communications

## Results

- Open, flexible software based communications infrastructure
- Wireless communications enables flexible, effective communication
- Open source solution integrates with ticketing
- Ability to offer chargeable telephony and communication services to visiting companies, performers and corporate users

Curve opened in Leicester in November 2008, following a five year development programme. Designed by renowned architect, Rafael Vinoly, the theatre has been funded by Leicester Council, the Arts Council and the European Commission with a remit to reinvigorate a run-down area of the City.

Curve is changing centuries of theatrical tradition through its highly innovative use of technology. Designed 'inside out' with the stage in the centre and foyers around the outside, the theatre has no backstage area, meaning both actors and scenery technicians are constantly on display to the audience.

"The theatre was conceived to reflect Leicester's multi-cultural and cosmopolitan nature," says Ruth Eastwood, Chief Executive, Curve. "It is also the most technologically advanced theatre in Britain, using cutting edge technology in all areas from the stage management to communications."

## Challenges

The highly innovative Curve has been designed to suit all forms of artistic celebration from circus to carnival to parade to black box theatre to proscenium arch. While this offers fantastic opportunities, it has also created operational challenges. Eastwood confirms, "This theatre is like no other and challenges many of the traditional theatre ways."

For example, the theatre has no dedicated ushers or usherettes. Instead, it relies on a single multi disciplined customer services team who can be deployed in numerous roles throughout the theatre, from the café to the ticket office and other customer facing activities. "They can be deployed and redeployed in any area around the building depending on business need, but their priority is always to ensure a fantastic customer experience," she says.

A key strategy for Curve is to adopt leading edge technology. "Being first is one of the theatre's drivers a philosophy we carry through every area of our business, particularly with the technology we utilise." says Eastwood. Indeed, Curve utilises technology on every level, from the 'print at home' ticketing service and opening of the front doors through to the scanning of the tickets by barcode readers at the entrance and to the stage flying

control system. Shweta Radia, Head of ICT, comments, "It was vital that any communications solution was innovative enough to meet the unusual demands of the building, and to provide a high level of flexibility and mobility for staff and theatre users."

Indeed, every aspect of the business relies upon effective communications, from managing scenery before and during performance to interacting with customers whether via the telephone, online or within the theatre. The theatre needed a highly flexible communications solution that could support both its current communications and customer interaction requirements, as well as future developments such as further integration with back office systems and online services.

## Solution

In order to meet these goals, the theatre has worked closely with NEC to implement a revolutionary communications solution which complements the theatre's leading edge technology. Based around a service-oriented Communications (SOC) architecture, the solution integrates the communications technologies with key business applications. The solution also has built-in redundancy to ensure the constant availability of the communications technologies, and hospitality features.

"The NEC technologies offer the theatre both flexibility and value for money," says Eastwood. Radia adds, "Deploying UNIVEREGE Spherically is also an open interface solution that enables integration with systems across the building, including our ticketing system and customer database, to provide a unified solution."

The theatre's ticketing system has already been integrated with the communications system through the contact centre, enabling staff to tailor call response based on customer profile and efficiently handle enquiries and bookings.

Furthermore, the theatre is using NEC's wireless technology to improve communications across the highly mobile workforce. Unlike the traditional radio technology, the SIP based wireless system is fully integrated with the rest of the communications solutions and provides excellent coverage. NEC also provided training to ensure users were comfortable with the concept of soft-phones.

"Staff can divert calls to their wireless headset or phone and be in communication anywhere across the theatre," explains Eastwood. "This is a large, circular building – the wireless has proven useful at enabling us to achieve excellent inter-departmental communications."

## Results

Despite opening at a time of economic crisis, Curve has had a fantastic start and is on track to meet its initial target of 124,000 tickets in the first

ten months. The communications technology has proved valuable to internal staff and corporate clients alike, scaling efficiently to accommodate fluctuations in requirements during peak season or major events.

Benefits of the solution include:

- **The service oriented communications (SOC) platform provides a range of possibilities regarding integrating other business applications and systems.**
- **As a Unified Communications solution, presence information is available giving an instant view as to whether an individual is in, out or on the phone, enabling users to make informed communication decisions.**
- **The wireless equipment – either headsets or traditional DECT phones – is available for hire to visiting theatrical companies and corporate events, providing an added value service.**
- **The flexibility of the NEC solution also enables the theatre to provide telephones in dressing rooms for the first time, with the ability to track and charge back call costs to each company.**
- **The contract cleaning company also use the communications solution as a time management system to clock staff in and out.**
- **The integrated contact centre solution enables the theatre to record calls and monitor quality, supporting training and facilitating security processes.**
- **The contact centre dashboard provides customer services staff with up to the moment information on missed calls and response rate to ensure the Service Level Agreement is met.**

Eastwood concludes, "Curve has proven that its innovative design, philosophy and technology exploitation works. The theatre will continue to exploit its investment in unified communications and other technologies to deliver a great customer experience and efficiency and cost effective operations. The technology has played an important part in what we do and our vision, but if the underpinning technology is working well, the customer shouldn't even notice it."

## About

Leicester's Curve is a £61 million state-of-the-art cultural project which was opened by Her Majesty the Queen on 4th December 2008. Designed by renowned architect Rafael Vinoly, Curve is a huge curved glass building which features two auditoria, one with up to 803 fixed seats while a 400 flexible seated auditorium provides a versatile smaller space.