

# CASE STUDY

## FARROW & BALL

**South West Communications Group deploys a global multi-media contact centre and unified communications solution to craftsmen in paint and wallpaper, Farrow & Ball.**

Farrow & Ball has been making premium paint and wallpaper using age-old methods and original formulations in their Dorset factory since the company was founded by John Farrow & Richard Ball in 1946. The company has grown significantly since then, with more than 50 showrooms globally, from New York to Frankfurt and Paris to Dublin.

Farrow & Ball was an existing customer of **swcomms** and had been using an Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Enterprise since 2004. Although it more than adequately served the business as a telephone system, it did not address the changing communication habits of their consumers and stockists, and would also require significant investment to bring it up to the latest software levels.

With the customer service, marketing, sales, finance and human resource departments, and the distribution and manufacturing units all based at their Wimborne headquarters, Farrow & Ball needed a **sophisticated telephone system** that would accommodate their entire workforce, including mobile and field-based staff. They needed to link to other major sites in Toronto, Paris and Frankfurt using VoIP and SIP trunking technology and, eventually, to all global showrooms.

To ensure the best possible consumer experience, Farrow & Ball also wanted to invest in cutting edge technology that could deal with **multi-media messages** and give them the same priority as incoming calls. These would be taken by customer service staff in the UK or Canada depending on the time of day they are received. Being a global company means that these calls can come from anywhere in the world so calls needed to be routed depending on the country of origin so they could be handled by a consultant proficient in the appropriate language.

The logo for Farrow & Ball, featuring the company name in a white, serif font on a black rectangular background.

The company's commitment to customer service also meant they wanted both call and PC screen recording to ensure their staff maintained its excellent standards.

**swcomms** undertook a **cost benefit analysis** to ascertain whether it was feasible for Farrow & Ball to continue with the existing digital system or migrate to an alternative solution. The analysis revealed it was more cost effective to invest in Mitel's Unified Communications (UC) and Enterprise (ECC) solutions, an upgraded local area network (LAN) and SIP trunks.

Phase one began with the LAN upgrade which was required to accommodate the new VoIP solution and to provide power over Ethernet for the handsets and DECT base stations. The PCs can also be powered via the new data LAN.

The Mitel Connect solution was installed on the company's existing VMware server hardware to leverage the cost-effective, high availability resilience of a virtualised environment.

This provided the core infrastructure for the entire solution, including telephony and call recording rather than using costly standalone servers that could expose the company to a potential single point of failure. The solution is simple to manage, moves, adds and changes are easily accommodated and there is capacity to scale up to 20,000 users.

More than 50 geographically dispersed showrooms are linked to head office via a fully managed global MPLS network with key connections into Toronto, Paris and Frankfurt. The Mitel solution uses this network to link all users located on multiple sites enabling toll-free calls and the seamless transfer of calls to a company-wide directory.



Farrow & Ball had identified customers were choosing to use other methods of communication to contact them, so **multi-lingual, multi-media technology** was integrated with the Mitel to handle calls and all forms of messages equally, so that emails, fax mail and web chat are given the same priority as incoming phone queries.

**swcomms** developed specific integration software that ensures overseas calls are routed to a language-appropriate agent or account manager. If the same customer calls back or emails the next day, they will be automatically routed to the same agent to improve Farrow & Ball's exemplary customer service record.

This ECC solution is used by 50 advisors/managers in Wimborne and Toronto. Live customer interaction data is evaluated and acted upon to ensure all calls are answered in a timely fashion while recordings are used to identify where improvements can be made and to train existing and new staff. **Full PCI compliance** is also included, with the recordings automatically pausing when the customer provides their card and CV2 numbers.

Screen scraping records the activity on the customer service advisors' PC screens during a call. Farrow & Ball uses this function to ensure its in-house database is easy to use and that their agents can quickly acquire and deliver accurate information to its customers. This helps Farrow & Ball identify any improvements that need to be made in terms of software as well as to identify staff training requirements to ensure the agent and customer experience is a positive one reflective of a premium brand.

**swcomms** provided DECT handsets to ensure mobile staff working in the warehouses and manufacturing units could remain contactable at all times. Hot desking enables employees to input a PIN into any handset and access all the functionality of their extension to again remain contactable regardless of where they are working.

The international deployment of the solution was undertaken in Toronto by a Canadian Mitel partner managed by **swcomms** while one of our technical specialists installed the Mitel equipment in France and Germany and provided onsite training.

**swcomms** helped Farrow & Ball maintain the local identity of these larger overseas offices. Despite them all linking to the customer services departments in Wimborne or Toronto, customers still call the local rate French or German number. Meanwhile, British customers call the Wimborne number, rather than non-geographic 08 or 03 numbers, as the company is proud of their Dorset roots and are passionate about thinking globally but acting locally.

Sixty SIP channels were installed to replace Farrow & Ball's ISDN lines to significantly **reduce line rental costs and call charges to the tune of £6,000 per year.**

Disaster recovery has been accommodated within the architecture of the solution by spreading it across multiple buildings providing full N+1 resilience. Farrow & Ball has also retained the use of a number of ISDN channels as a fall-back alternative to the SIP channels. In the event of an outage on the MPLS network, calls will be automatically routed to the ISDN lines to ensure the company remains contactable.

Phase two includes the integration of social media interactions into the multi-media contact centre. With a strong social media following of more than 250,000 fans, **swcomms**, Mitel and Farrow & Ball are working closely together to integrate Facebook and Twitter, so they are notified of any messages, status updates or tweets via email. It will also see the deployment of handsets to their global showrooms.

**"We wanted a system that enabled us to personalise the experience. We are a global company but want to retain a personal, local feel across all our customers and markets.**

**"As a premium brand, it's essential we provide the best possible service consistently across all interactions and can support our multi-lingual needs. Mitel has allowed us to do this with some great functionality that supports service excellence."**

**Clare Atkin, head of customer services**