

Exchange Communications Case Study

Exchange Communications Goes Into Production With Sangoma Technology

For more than two decades, Albuquerque, NM-based Exchange Communications has been providing network and telephony infrastructure services for film and television companies in production hubs such as Los Angeles, New York, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico among others. During its time in the industry, Exchange Communications has built a solid reputation for delivering flexible and reliable communications systems – including Fax-over-IP and voice-over-IP (VoIP) – for production sites across the country.

The Challenge

In the film industry, production sites are constantly on the move. Yet ongoing communications systems are vital for production teams, says Blake Hannon, Technology Manager at Exchange Communications. “Film and TV production offices are like new businesses that are only around for a few months, or sometimes weeks. But they’re not always the nicest facilities, and in many cases, they are in remote locations with no available physical infrastructure from a telecom provider.”

Exchange Communications’ job is to deploy voice and data services as quickly and efficiently as possible. “Typically we have less than a week to get things up and running,” Hannon says. “In most cases we do VoIP for voice and sometimes work with SIP trunk providers that bring in their own VoIP equipment.”

One unique challenge for the industry is that it continues to rely heavily on fax communications for sending out call sheets to multiple recipients. “While base camps also use email, the most reliable way to ensure everyone arrives at the place they need to be at the right time is fax, whether they’re out in the middle of the desert, or shooting in downtown L.A.”

Setting up traditional phone lines can be costly for short-term usage (up to \$75 a month). According to Hannon, “It’s more flexible and cost-effective to bring in Fax-over-IP services because it doesn’t require additional engineering – or phone lines – to make it work because we already have the network in place.”

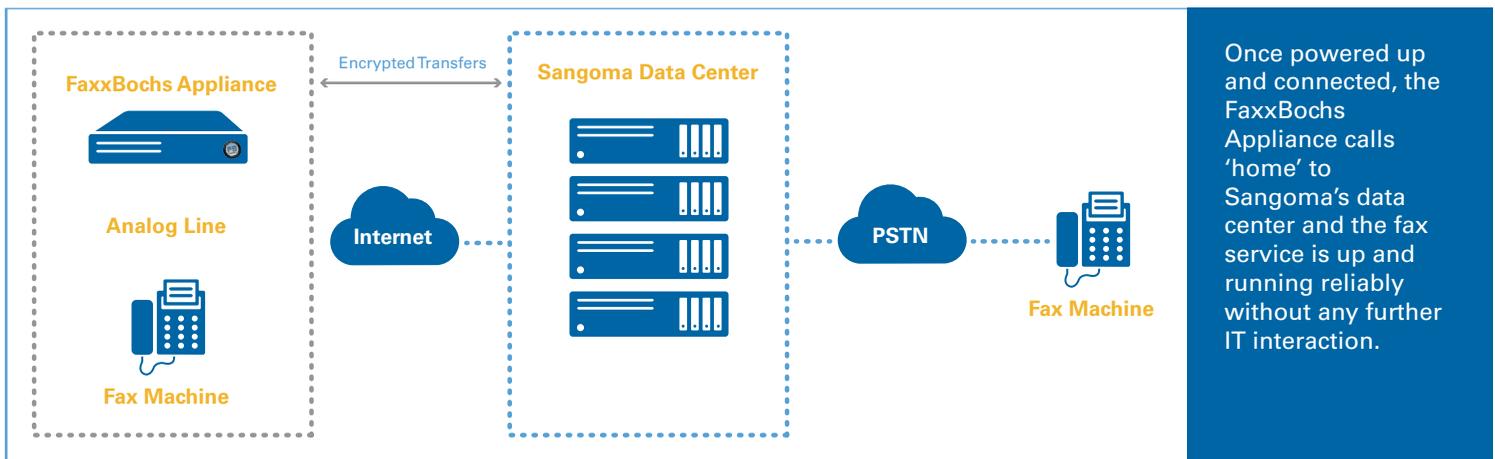
The Solution

After trying other solutions, five years ago Exchange Communications began using FaxxBochs® Fax-over-IP from Sangoma. This cloud-based fax service is relatively inexpensive (services start at \$30 a month) and can support standard analog fax machines and up to four fax lines. Users can also set up features such as incoming fax-to-email, view all incoming/outgoing faxes, resend existing faxes, and upload documents to fax out functions using the FaxxBochs portal.

“Since we started with FaxxBochs, it has been a super-reliable technology for us. We just have to prep the units for shipping, plug them in behind the firewall, and they’re good to go,” Hannon notes. “It’s a nice straightforward solution that’s a reasonable cost, easy to deploy, and can address all our customers’ fax requirements.”

He estimates the company deploys about 50 to 100 FaxxBochs units a year. “The best part is they’re reusable so can be easily reconfigured and plugged into a new network at a new location.”

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Once powered up and connected, the FaxxBochs Appliance calls 'home' to Sangoma's data center and the fax service is up and running reliably without any further IT interaction.

The Result

Hannon says the benefits go beyond delivering lower-cost fax services. "There are lots of nifty features that allow you to convert files to PDF and for sending out by email. You can also view transmissions between sites and download faxes in transit which helps us a lot when we need to provide assistance."

Last year Exchange Communications also invested in FreePBX devices from Sangoma to speed deployment of its phone services. FreePBX is an open source platform that uses Asterisk® PBX software, allowing users to easily write dial plans and configure files for VoIP communications systems.

"Because of the short term nature of production, someone could say they are moving offices next week and need phones on Monday. FreePBX lets us turn on service really fast," Hannon says. "We can prep 50 phones, throw them in a box, and ship them for plugging into a data network to meet the deadline date. All the technician on the ground has to do is plug them in on the fly."

He says customers particularly like the key system functionality because it mimics older phone systems, as well as the voice-to-text and email features. "You can't do that on other, more expensive PBX solutions. We're also able to deploy phones on myriad data connections, from the production office or a construction warehouse down the road, to the special effects or finance and accounting teams. Because the PBX is hosted centrally, they can intercom and transfer calls as if they were a single office."

With Sangoma, Hannon says he gets the flexibility and speed he needs to get the job done. "In this industry, you have to keep pace with change. Tools like FaxxBochs and FreePBX make it easier."