

# Toshiba Helps Boulevard Automotive Group Leave the Competition in the Dust



Ron Charron and Brad Willingham of Boulevard Auto Group, closest to vehicle, together with John Berg and Ben Berg of Transcom, far left and right, designed a Toshiba Strata CIX IP system that helped save Boulevard Auto Group \$60,000 in its first year.



Boulevard Automotive Group General Manager Brad Willingham uses a Toshiba SoftIPT softphone on his laptop to do virtually everything he can do with his desk telephone.

One of the oldest auto dealerships in Southern California, Boulevard Automotive Group of Signal Hill, Calif., sells thousands of GMC, Pontiac and Buick cars and trucks every year. A family business, Boulevard Auto Group was founded in 1961 by Jim Willingham and is now owned by his son, Brad Willingham, and partner, Ron Charron, who oversee 105 employees who service and support the dealership's thousands of customers.

Like his father, Willingham focuses on offering what he considers to be the industry's best built cars in a setting that makes it simple to research, buy and service cars. Boulevard Buick/Pontiac/GMC's slogan is "We're easy to deal with," and he expects the same of his vendors. For a Toshiba Strata CIX IP business communication system, he turned to Authorized Toshiba Dealer Transcom Telecommunications, based in Paramount, Calif.

### Mission: Use IP to Maximize Customer Service and Internal Communication

John and Ben Berg, brothers and co-owners of Transcom Telecommunications, recommended that Boulevard Buick/Pontiac/GMC migrate to Toshiba's Strata CIX IP business communication system to meet Willingham's goals.

Willingham said, "After many years with our Toshiba Strata CTX670 and DK424i digital business communication systems, we knew that staying with a Toshiba system was smart business. Working with Transcom, we decided to upgrade to Toshiba's new CIX IP platform. With our goal of using IP to maximize customer service and improve internal communication, we were confident that Toshiba, together with Transcom, could deliver for us."

Among the goals Willingham had were to have both his dealership and collision center on the same system with the same voice mail, to use one switchboard operator for both locations, and to reduce monthly recurring telephone service costs at the collision center.

### Solution: Toshiba Connects Remote Collision Center

Installed by Transcom, Boulevard Auto Group's Strata CIX670 is a 176-port system with a T1 line and a mix of IP desk and soft telephones as well as digital telephones. The main Strata CIX system is located at the auto dealership. The collision center, located a half mile away, uses a point-to-point T1 for its data needs.

Transcom was able to use the same T1 for the Toshiba VoIP telephones. This design eliminated the need for the second telephone and voice mail systems, receptionist and telephone lines. It also makes extension dialing easy between employees at both locations and enables seamless paging. The operator at the main location answers and transfers calls to employees at both locations.

Being able to migrate the existing Toshiba system to the new Strata CIX IP platform was a key goal. Taking advantage of Toshiba's legendary migration path and its promise never to leave a customer behind, Transcom migrated the dealership's old Strata CTX670 to the new Strata CIX670 IP system and was able to re-use the Strategy DK voice processing system. By being able to keep and reuse much of their original equipment, Toshiba helped deliver a significant cost savings plus all the benefits of a new VoIP system.

## Result #1

### Result #1: Improved Customer Service and Internal Communication

With the Toshiba Strata CIX IP system, both internal and external communication has improved, according to Willingham. "Calls and call transfers are easily made by direct extension dialing regardless of which facility," he said. "Voice mail messages can be forwarded or copied to anyone at the dealership or collision center, and we can do conference calls on the fly."

In a business with a high level of customer contact, Willingham said he appreciates that Toshiba and the Transcom team both understood that he wanted to use VoIP technology to make his business more customer-friendly. He said, "The VoIP technology is virtually invisible to our customers and employees. Unless we tell them, nobody even knows we have an IP business communication system — the sound quality and reliability is that good."

## Result #2

### Result #2: Collision Center Just an Extension Away Using VoIP

By connecting the dealership's collision center via IP, its 15 employees are part of the Toshiba Strata CIX IP business communication system, which includes voice mail, paging and direct extension dialing to all other employees at the main location. Voice mail messages can be forwarded or copied between all employees, regardless of location, and paging can be done over the telephones to either or both buildings from any telephone.

By moving the collision center to VoIP, the dealership saves nearly \$5,000 in telephone service costs. John Berg said, "VoIP is a very cost-effective way to connect remote offices, whether they are across the street, across town, or in another country."

## Result #3

### Result #3: Smooth Transition via Migration

A Toshiba and Transcom customer for more than 20 years, Boulevard Buick/Pontiac/GMC saved more than \$25,000 by being able to keep and reuse much of its original equipment, including the original Stratagy DK voice processing system, telephone cabinets, station cards, trunk cards, the DSS console, and all of its Toshiba digital telephones. In fact, since the Strata CIX IP system could be enabled for digital endpoints, the majority of the original digital telephones stayed in service, resulting in no learning curve for employees in addition to the cost savings.

"We are big believers in Toshiba's migration path," Willingham said. "After all, this is our third migration in the last 15 years, and much of our older equipment is still hard at work." Willingham also applauds the durability of the Toshiba desk telephones. He said, "Life's rough for most telephones in the dealership environment. Our Toshiba telephones are exposed to dust, paint, outdoor conditions, heavy use, and they perform great, providing high-quality sound year after year."

## Result #4

### Result #4: GM's Desk Telephone Goes Anywhere His Laptop Goes

Using VoIP also has enabled some new benefits for Willingham, including use of Toshiba's SoftlIPT softphone on his laptop. The softphone enables him to have his "desk telephone" on his laptop virtually anywhere there is Internet access. He said, "The SoftlIPT screen looks and acts just like my desk telephone. I can make calls, answer calls, listen to voice mail, transfer calls, initiate conference calls, and more, all from my laptop with a plug-in headset."

## Bottom Line: \$60,000 Savings in the First Year, Improved Communication

Transcom helped exceed Willingham's goals with the Toshiba Strata CIX IP business communication system. Not only is communication improved for both customers and employees, the dealership also had a cost savings of more than \$60,000 by migrating from the existing Toshiba system. It saved \$25,000 by being able to re-use telephones and equipment; eliminated the need for a second operator, a savings of nearly \$30,000; and completely eliminated the telephone service bill at its collision center, a savings of nearly \$5,000 per year. In addition, because the IP pipeline is so robust, the dealership has virtually eliminated busy signals, so customer calls get through every time. With more than 20,000 incoming calls every month, that's a big accomplishment.

Willingham summed it up by saying, "With the Toshiba system zooming along, we're able to focus on driving sales and supercharging our customer relationships. Together, Toshiba and Transcom are helping us leave the competition in the dust."

