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RE: VoIP System Support

In 2017, DeKalb County School District partnered with Layer 3 Communications to replace its existing, aging Avaya phone system with a new Shoretel/Mitel system. District-wide, this project consisted of approximately 12,000 phones, 200 switches, 15 servers, as well as all necessary licensing to enable DCSD to utilize the feature sets requested in RFP 17-24.

To support such a large VoIP ecosystem, Layer 3 Communications (now MGT) crafted a custom support model aimed to minimize downtime on the new system as much as possible. This support model consists of three key elements:

1. Technical Support – DCSD has access to our Network Operations Center in Norcross, GA to submit a ticket for any technical assistance needed with the VoIP system. Open 24/7, we are able to support the District at all times. If an onsite resource is needed, our office is within 30 minutes of all DCSD schools. When something breaks, we are available to identify the issue quickly, and remediation is carried out by qualified engineers. Our teams have become extremely proficient working together to the point that we serve as an extension of the DCSD Telecom staff to keep services up and running for end users. Technical support requests placed over the last 6 years range from information requests to onsite assistance when services are down.
2. RMA Support – When equipment becomes faulty/defective, a ticket is opened with our NOC and we process the RMA on DCSD’s behalf. To this point, we have replaced approximately:
  - a. 125 phones
  - b. 5 switches
  - c. 1 server
3. Routine Maintenance – Like all modern day technology, these systems require maintenance. Vulnerabilities in the software need to be patched. Code upgrades need to be scheduled, usually afterhours or on weekends. Bug fixes need to be applied. Layer 3 Communications handles all of this for DCSD’s Mitel system. We’ve also taken this a step further by including monitoring and moves, adds, and changes to the servers and storage responsible for running the Mitel system.
  - a. Mitel includes the maintenance of all of licensing/software under a support contract. Therefore, not only is all of the Mitel hardware owned by DCSD covered under this contract, all licensing/software associated with Contact Cener and the 11,871 extensions in use today, are included as well. It’s imperative to keep the licensing/software under support in order to keep up to date against the latest vulnerabilities.

In total, MGT has spent ~600 hours supporting DCSD's Mitel system since the original contract began in 2017.

- The majority of that time (approximately 390 hours) has been spent troubleshooting issues related to/causing outages, issues within Contact Center, or an inability to access certain features such as voicemail, reporting, or placing/receiving calls.
- About 180 of those hours were spent specifically on the support and routine maintenance of the servers and storage. Services include:
  - Failover from Sam Moss to WBBC in the event of a failure at Sam Moss
  - ESXI upgrades for VMware
  - Firmware updates for Dell Servers
  - Tegile updates for storage
  - Windows patching
  - OS updates for Mitel virtual machines.
- 24 hours were spent on tickets related directly to switches. These switches tend to work great, until they eventually fail due to age and continuous use. A switch failing can bring down services throughout an entire school, which is why it's important to always carry support on them. *\*\*Please note that switch troubleshooting is included in the 390 hours mentioned above, but a ticket was not opened specifically for a switch issue in those instances.*

The age of the devices on the system are now between 3 and 7 years old which typically is still fairly young in VoIP device life cycles. We would like to point out that Mitel announced this system End of Sale as of 12/31/2023, with an End of Support date of 12/31/29. Therefore, it is critical to maintain a support contract on these assets to keep the system functioning as normal through DCSD's expected refresh cycle. We believe this system could serve the District through 2027 (10 years) with minimal downtime, disruption, or equipment failures, as long as the 3 key elements of support listed above are continued throughout the life of the system.

We would like to call out that the Tegile SAN is now End of Support from the manufacturer so we can no longer call them for RMA, bug fixes, code upgrades, etc. We do have a few spare discs in our warehouse that we will be able to potentially swap out if one of the current discs fails. We will continue to monitor and manage the SAN and provide technical support via our NOC on a best effort basis.

An out of support product being on the network does pose a few risks. In the case of a hardware failure, the phone system could be down until a replacement is procured and put in line. There is also the possibility that software vulnerabilities present opportunities for malicious actors to infiltrate the network. When products go out of support, manufacturers no longer patch known vulnerabilities which puts DCSD at risk. We have provided DCSD with pricing for the replacement of this equipment.

MGT is proposing a renewal of the support services purchased by the District on RFP 17-24. It is our goal to continue to support the District throughout the life of this system in order for DCSD to maximize the features available within the system, and to minimize downtime.