

# Proof of Concept

# COLUMBIA

## General Communications Partners with Clients to Achieve Outstanding Results

### Client

Columbia  
Construction  
Company

### Challenge

To replace the outdated telephones with an advanced system that would meet the firm's requirements at headquarters and in the field.

### Solution

A ShoreTel VoIP system from General Communications

### Results

- Employees can receive calls and emails in the office, at job sites, or through their cell phones.
- In-house conference calling saves us time and money.
- ShoreTel is very easy to use and flexible, which is important for our changing needs.
- GCC planning, installation, and training were outstanding.



*Jean DiNitto is delighted with the ShoreTel system. She said it was easy to learn and has many time-saving features.*

Columbia Construction Company, founded in 1925 by Sam Lilly, is a third-generation, family-owned company with an annual volume of \$230 million. Bruce Gordon is president and Randy Lilly is executive vice president and treasurer.

Headquartered in North Reading, Massachusetts, the firm, has a diverse portfolio of projects that span the corporate, academic, healthcare, and hospitality sectors.

The company has considerable expertise in preconstruction services, construction management, design-build, sustainable building, general contracting, and tenant improvements. Their projects include 175-185 Wyman Street, Waltham, MA; Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA; Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA, and many others.

"We have worked with General Communications for more than 15 years," said Sue Lievens, executive administrative assistant. "They originally installed a Toshiba system for us, and although it was still working, it was old and didn't really meet our current needs. We have always been very happy with GCC's products and services, so when we decided to replace the system, we called them for advice and a quote."

*"General Communications evaluated our needs and recommended a ShoreTel system with features that save us time and make us more productive."*

"Josh Folsom, our IT director, and I met with the GCC team. They are also a family-owned business, and many of the same people have been working with us through the years. They asked a lot of questions about what we wanted in a new system, made recommendations, and gave us a quote for a ShoreTel system. We did a price comparison and discovered their pricing was very competitive, which pleased us because we really didn't want to work with anyone else."

"The advantages of the new system are outstanding," Lievens continued. "Many of our employees are on the road a lot, traveling to job sites all over New England. Because the system is Internet based and uses sophisticated software, a client can either call the person using the direct dial number or call the main switchboard, and our receptionist can transfer the call to the office phone, job site, or cell phone."



*Sue Lievens, executive administrative assistant, and Josh Folsom, IT director, worked with GCC on all aspects of the new ShoreTel system.*

“Employees can also have emails delivered simultaneously to the office and cell phones. Caller ID allows our project teams to see who’s calling and determine if they should take the call right away or if it would be better handled once they get back to the office.”

“The ability to set up and manage conference calls in-house is a time- and cost-saving feature. With many projects going on simultaneously, our teams conference with clients a lot. The calls are easy to set up because the ShoreTel system automatically creates its own conference bridge and access codes for each call, and there is never a problem with someone joining the wrong call. The system also integrates seamlessly with Microsoft® Outlook®, making conference notification a snap.”

“As the company grows and works on different job sites, ShoreTel’s advanced technology makes it easy to add or change configurations.”

“Ease of use was an important consideration in our decision-making process. Some of our employees, including our receptionist, Jean DiNitto, were concerned that the new system, with many advanced features, would be difficult to learn and use. ShoreTel really is inherently user friendly.”

*“GCC worked with us every step of the way through the planning and installation. In addition, their training was superb.”*

“GCC worked with us every step of the way through the planning and installation. Together, we were able to do a lot of the work ahead of time, so when the system went live, the learning curve was minimized. Because of careful planning on both our parts, the switchover went very smoothly.”

“In addition, their training was superb. Our firm has approximately 100 employees, so I scheduled six training classes over a three day period to make sure that everyone would be comfortable with the phones and use all the great features.”

“For example, with less than a day’s training Jean felt comfortable using the system, and she is the one who is using it all day. She also says that she can now answer and direct calls much more quickly, freeing her time to do other officetasks, which she enjoys.”

“I would definitely recommend GCC to anyone. They distribute excellent brands, they are knowledgeable, easy to work with, and made sure we were satisfied with the entire system. Now if we do have a question or need something, they’re just a phone call away.”



*Jim O'Connell, senior systems administrator, at Columbia with the heart of the ShoreTel system.*



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