

# Case Study:

## Longstanding communications provider is 'worth its weight in gold' to Fish Brothers family-owned jewellers

The Fish Brothers Group Ltd. is an independently owned, family run jewellery business with a history that stretches as far back as 1830. The current board is the 7th generation of the family to run the company, which has never before in its history been as diverse or as successful as it is today.

With 15 branches - covering the Charles Fish, Charles Fish Boutique and Charles Fish Pawnbrokers brands - Fish Brothers describes itself as aiming to be 'a little bit quirky and a little bit hip'. But the core of the business remains the same as it was back in 1830 - a focus on customer service and attention to detail, a real sense of history and 'family', and a desire to work in long term partnership with suppliers that have a similar ethos.

### Supporting Business Growth

The Network Communications Group has been in business since 1987, and can count Fish Brothers as one of its first and longest standing clients. Initially NCG Ltd was responsible for installing standalone telephone systems into Fish Brothers' head office in Walthamstow and a couple of branches, but over the years that relationship has developed into a true partnership between two like minded businesses.

As Fish Brothers Group expanded its operations, it became clear that a comprehensive overhaul of its communications infrastructure was required, as company director Peter Coleman outlines:

*"The big change came about five years ago, around 2007, as the business was expanding rapidly. What we had was very basic, so we needed a far more sophisticated comms solution - and Network Communications Group, as our existing provider, was the obvious choice to help us achieve that.*

*With multiple branches, call costs between sites were a real issue - and so NCG Ltd recommended an IP based solution which would enable all sites to operate as one network, enabling staff to simply dial an internal extension number to speak to other branches or head office. By going for the IP system we were able to significantly reduce the amount we were paying to BT for line rental. In fact, I think we managed to remove about 10 lines in total!"*

### Implementing The Right Technology

NCG Ltd installed a fully integrated Ericsson LG iPECS IP phone servers across Fish Brothers' entire branch network, as well as managing the installation of all the necessary connectivity for security systems, PDQ machines and IT systems, including firewalls. As part of the project they also liaised to take over lines from BT, numbering and the rationalisation of incoming lines, as well managing the implementation of two broadband lines per branch. Peter continues:

*"Gathering sales and ordering information from our branches is a fundamental requirement of the business. On the retail side this takes place every 15 minutes and it's essential that there is no congestion or hold up in getting this information back to the head office teams, hence having two broadband lines per branch for resilience and backup.*

*NCG Ltd managed the entire process - including working directly with BT Openreach, our CCTV company and our IT provider - to make sure that everything was set up and ready for us. We were undergoing a major refurb of our offices at the same time and we certainly weren't an easy client to deal with! In fact, we decided to carry out some office moves halfway through the process, which meant relocating everything into temporary offices for a short while, but NCG Ltd handled it all really well. It's been a big programme of development and is still very much ongoing, with a lot of work involved."*

The new IP-based system not only saved Fish Brothers money by making all calls between branches free of charge, but also provided a range of other flexibility that typically comes with an IP solution. This includes the ability to run IP soft phones on laptops when required, to log into a desk phone from any handset when travelling between branches, and to set up new users and new branches quickly and easily, simply by plugging in an IP handset.

As part of the overall communications refresh, NCG Ltd also provided the management team with iPhones running on the O2 network, and now manages all handset issues, upgrades and add-ons for the business. So now, in summary, Network Communications Group, look after all communications services – fixed line calls, lines, broadband, mobiles, system support and so on which are all detailed on one itemised bill, making Fish Brothers' entire communications costs simple and straightforward to manage.

## Proactive Support And Management

One of the key benefits which Fish Brothers has gained over the years is the fact that NCG Ltd also takes a proactive role in monitoring and managing the company's communications requirements, as Peter explains:

*"NCG Ltd are first port of call when something goes wrong, but they are also the ideal monitoring tool. They keep an eye on what were using and what we're not and will advise us if they think we could save money by removing something. They are very good at managing everything for us so we don't have*



*to worry. Which gives us an easy life comms wise, as they just get on with it.*

*In reality, we don't really want to have to deal with the tech stuff. NCG Ltd just take issues on board and deal with them. If something doesn't work, they fix it. How they do it is up to them - we don't mind, we just want it fixed. And when they need to carry out work they tell us what needs doing in plain English. We just want to know that they can do it and what the cost will be. We also rely on them to tell us what we need and to let us know when new technology is available that might help us, or if there is a better or more cost effective way of doing things. Anything that saves us money is good with us!"*

## Planning For The Future

Over the last five years, Fish Brothers has continued to expand, calling on NCG Ltd as required to help the company's communications infrastructure to keep pace. There are now 15 sites in total across the South East, supporting 25 staff at head office and a further 40+ across all of the different branches, including the flagship Charles Fish store at Canary Wharf.

More recently, NCG Ltd has also added an operator console at Head Office to support the new receptionist, as well as implementing an

Out of Hours answering system and an automated attendant. They are also in the process of upgrading head office to Super Fast fibre broadband from their own network provider, and the next project will be to install a new server for Charles Fish Pawnbrokers, including all additional connectivity requirements. Peter concludes:

*"One of nicest things about working with NCG Ltd is that their engineers are long-standing with the company. The branches get to know people and trust them, so don't have to watch over them as they would with people they didn't know - which is really helpful in our trade. The engineers also take personal responsibility for making sure we're happy - even giving out their own mobile phone numbers so we can contact them at weekends. They understand that ours is a seven days a week business even if theirs isn't.*

*I'd definitely recommend Network Communications Group to other companies, and have already done so. Full credit to Graham and the team for doing such an excellent job. There is great trust, the staff know them and value what they do - and this is vital to us, worth its weight in gold, and what makes working with NCG Ltd so attractive. We understand each other, we like the people and we like the familiarity of working with a long term partner."*