W RLD
TELECOM LABS

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## *Call Shop Carrier Serves Sub-Saharan Africa*

Background

The client is a Paris-based company that was established specifically to serve the Call Shop market around the French-speaking world. The client had already decided that the best strategy was to use VoIP in the shop and, where possible, use the public internet to carry the traffic back to a central switching centre in Paris. Here, the client used their experience and traffic volume to negotiate attractive rates with a small number of carefully selected carriers.

WTL Solution

The client and WTL produced a solution that was based on a central IPNx switch in Paris and a package for the call shops. The call shops link to Paris using IP connections. In order to make the best possible use of the available IP bandwidth, WTL's NOP (Network Optimisation Protocol) is used on these links. In each shop there is a VoIP gateway, a PVx to optimise the traffic and a billing PC running a customised application. The shops range in size from 4 to 24 booths, some are combined with a cyber café whilst some are purely for voice. For operational simplicity the client wished to use the same standard set of equipment in all shops whether they were in Paris or Mali.

One unusual feature of the solution was that WTL cooperated with the client to produce a customised billing application which runs in the call shop.
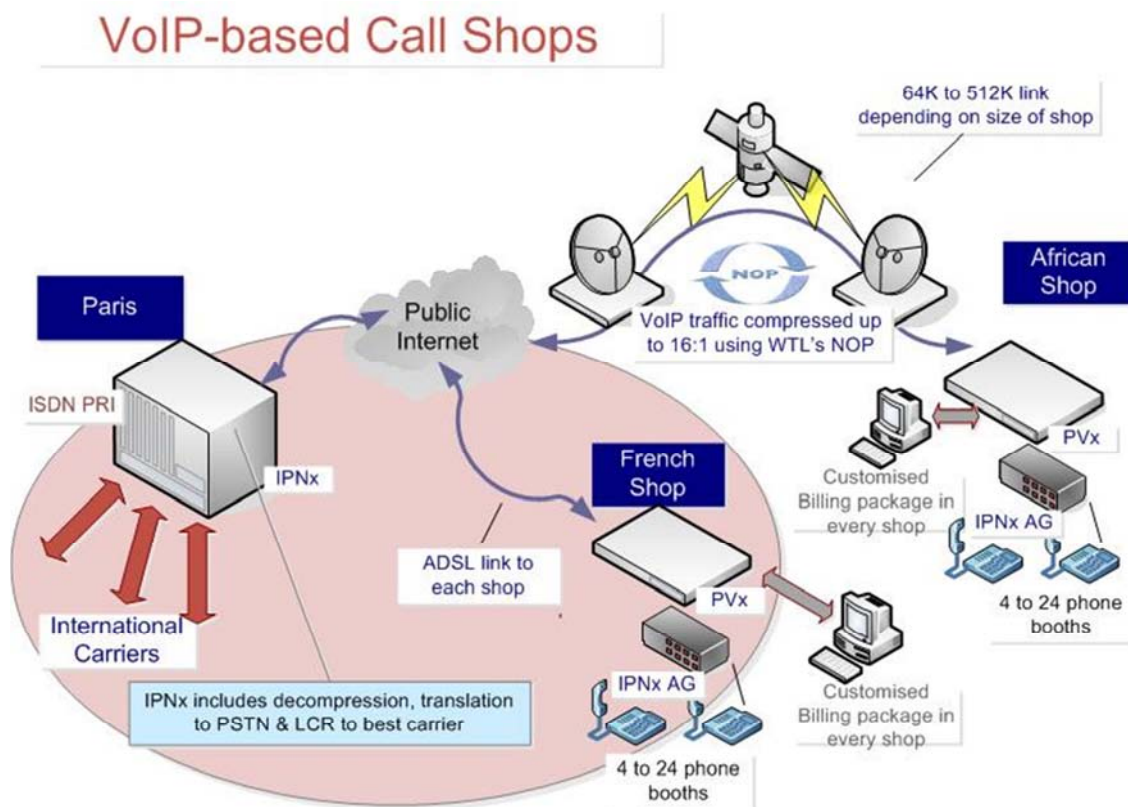
Business Model

This client has a number of business models which they run. Firstly, they operate their own call shops. Secondly, there are franchised shops which operate under the client's umbrella. Finally, there are independent businesses running their own chains of call shops to whom the client offers minutes.

In the first case the client has 10 shops around France and a presence in the USA. However, the company has also established very strong links in Africa and currently has shops in Benin, Mali, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Togo.

An important part of the strategy is that the client offers a lot of support to their Call Shop partners. This extends to providing the equipment for the shop, organising the IP connection, offering finance deals and business advice. In return the shop owner must sign up to use the service for a fixed period.

In some cases the client is able to take extra advantage of their connections to some difficult destinations in Africa. For example, they have set up a 1Mbps satellite link to Mali. The bandwidth is shared between the client's own call shop traffic, ISP traffic and the remainder is available for the company to offer as a wholesaler to other operators.

VoIP Pioneers

The client's CEO points out the company were one of the first to realise the potential of applying the cost savings of using VoIP in the highly competitive call shop market, "We always believed that this was the smart way to do things. VoIP saves us a lot of cost and complexity when we are setting up a shop. Finding WTL's NOP was the missing ingredient for us. It meant that we could get all the calls down a single line – an ADSL line in France or maybe a VSAT connection in our African shops."

Future

The current strategy will continue to be rolled out with expansion planned in the current countries but also adding new countries to the network.

The client has already started to offer a Pre-Paid calling card service in some of the territories where they operate. This may be extended to more countries if it proves to be a success.

Benefits of WTL Solution

➢ Fully IP based
➢ Same solution works in Europe and Africa
➢ Reduced line rental and deposits for the shop (do not need multiple analogue lines)
➢ Easier installation (multiple analogue lines are not required)
➢ No A-Leg call costs (all calls go to Paris switch by IP)
➢ Use of NOP reduces cost of carrying international traffic via satellite
➢ A single connection to the shop can be used for voice and data
➢ Use of NOP ties the shop's VoIP calls to the operator