



SDD Communications/Oakwood Worldwide

Oakwood Centralizes Call Accounting: Slashes Telephone Accounting Costs/Boosts Telephone Profits

Seeking a way to increase telephone profits in an increasingly competitive telecommunications market, Oakwood Worldwide centralized tenant communications accounting for 20,000 apartment units with help from SDD, a Microsoft Certified Partner whose JAZZ Enterprise software leverages the scalability and interoperability of the Microsoft® Windows® NT® server operating system.

Oakwood is a leading global provider of corporate housing and serviced apartments, with locations throughout North America, Asia and Europe. As a secondary profit center, Oakwood resells telecommunications services to its corporate extended stay tenants.

To manage the billing of tenant phone charges across many of its U.S. properties, Oakwood operated 18 independent telephone call accounting systems. Those 18 DOS-based systems collected telephone network activity from on-property PBX's. The systems posted the financial information related to the telephone activity into Oakwood's centralized Los Angeles-based property management system. This occurred over the company's wide area network (WAN). The local systems retained all detailed information related to the phone activity including costs, surcharges and profits.

Oakwood's distributed billing systems created too many billing, operational and management failure points. Oakwood believed those limitations detracted from guest experiences and created unnecessary effort for on-property management. They had begun to negatively impact Oakwood's telecommunications costs, revenues and profits. Larry D. McClements, Jr., Oakwood



Corporate Housing

Corporate Telecommunications Analyst described the situation like this: "Our telecommunications billing systems were generic and lacked structures that supported our tenant property managers. Services that were innovative or unique to our corporate tenant relationships could therefore not easily be reflected in our telecommunications billing systems and system outputs. They required our on-property staffs to develop and operate manual support processes. They also created significant back-end reconciliation work."

Oakwood also wanted its on-property staffs to focus more on the flexible delivery of telecom services to tenants and to focus less on the operational management of an on-property billing server. McClements further described the drivers behind finding a new solution: "The logistical challenges of changing a billing or pricing policy and deploying it across our properties and systems limited our ability to provide innovative and responsive



Making Communications Profitable.



telephone programs to tenants. Changes in billing policy required extensive involvement, negotiation and costs from our prior technology vendor. We needed to improve our flexibility and our speed.”

Getting Centered

Oakwood evaluated two alternatives for taming its communications account challenges: Implement many new inexpensive and limited/functionality call accounting systems, or install one centralized, more sophisticated call accounting system.

Oakwood concluded that the deployment of multiple installations would not solve many of their fundamental operational issues. Distributed systems required distributed and network-based support processes. They also created information management, integration and control challenges. Oakwood wanted to get away from lots of little islands of information scattered around the company.

JAZZ-ing Up the System

Oakwood selected JAZZ Enterprise Communications Accounting from Systems Design & Development, Inc. (SDD) as its centralized solution.

McClements explained the SDD choice: “We were concerned that with centralization, telecom accounting system problems would be amplified across many properties. We sought stability and scalability. SDD possessed the experience and a reputation for

reliable, high-volume, real-time billing with widely known and demanding hotel customers. We believed that SDD had mastered the Windows platform.”

SDD’s ability to customize their application to Oakwood’s needs also impressed McClements. “We sought telecom billing functionality unique to tenant relationships. SDD had direct experience in providing such capabilities at many notable hospitality properties. We found that their experience with these high-volume sophisticated customers was useful in two ways. First, their core system capabilities were structured properly for us and reflected property management best practices. Secondly, when we asked for customizations to support our unique environment, SDD intuitively understood our business challenges and responded with strong system designs.”

He added, “Many telephone call accounting systems are directed to generic corporate applications or to telecom service providers. However we believed that a billing technology vendor focused on serving property managers and tenant relationships would be a better long-term strategic fit for us.”

Single-Point Billing, Price, and Systems Management

SDD deployed the entire JAZZ solution for Oakwood, including all software customization, systems integration, acceptance testing and configuration. Oakwood and

SDD collaborated on training, network installation and operations planning.

Centrally deployed pricing schemes are now letting property and account managers react quickly to revenue and profit margin opportunities that were unachievable with their previous site-specific solutions. Oakwood’s corporate account managers now use JAZZ’s revenue modeling and pricing plans to optimize revenue opportunities across client accounts and properties. The JAZZ application now allows Oakwood managers to support tenant telephone activity in methods consistent with their guest or tenant relationship.

The consolidation of Oakwood’s servers and JAZZ’s centralized data warehouse now enables on-property, on-demand consolidations of guest and tenant communications revenues, profits and costs. Such roll-ups, especially when one tenant stays at multiple properties, had been difficult, time consuming and almost cost prohibitive to execute.

The JAZZ software architecture is interoperable with most commercially available telephone PBX systems, network environments and property management systems. The network team at Oakwood is also taking advantage of the application’s single-point management console for managing data exchanges, updating software and monitoring system health.

SDD also structured its support services to meet Oakwood’s approach to customer support systems. SDD provides level-one

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

Company Profile

Oakwood Worldwide is a leading global provider of corporate housing and serviced apartments, with locations throughout North America, Asia and Europe. As a secondary profit center, Oakwood resells telecommunications services to guests at its 20,000 corporate extended stay apartments.

Situation

To manage the billing of phone charges across many of its U.S. properties, Oakwood had to operate 18 independent telephone call accounting systems.

These distributed billing systems created too many billing, operational and management failure points. Oakwood believed those limitations detracted from guest experiences and created unnecessary effort for on-property management. They had begun to negatively impact Oakwood’s telecommunications costs, revenues and profits.

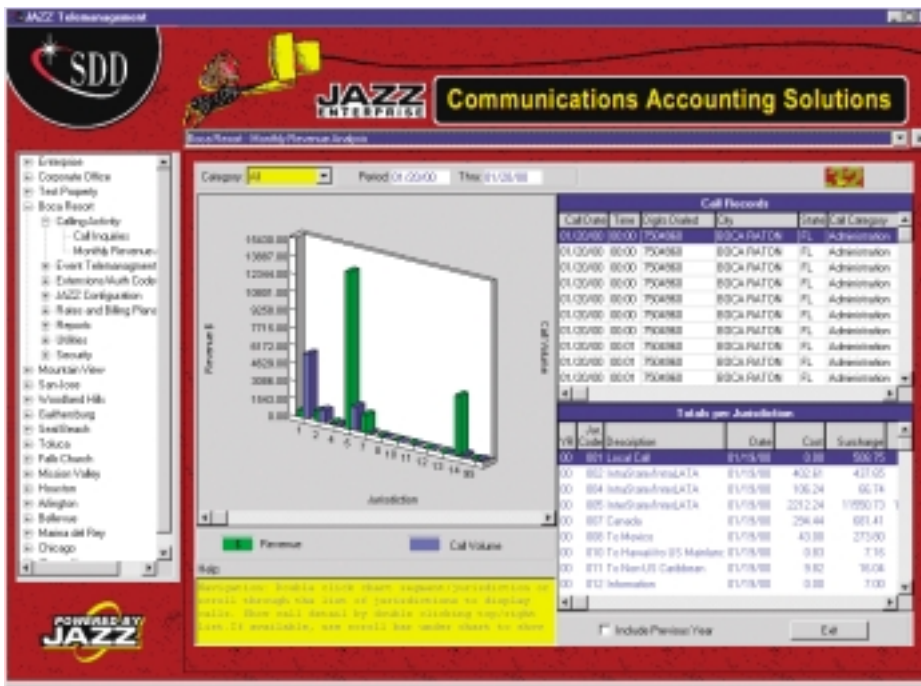
Business Solution

Oakwood deployed JAZZ Enterprise Communications Accounting from Microsoft Certified Partner, SDD, Inc. Built for Microsoft Windows NT server technology, JAZZ Enterprise gave the telecommunications reseller a cost

effective and centralized solution to increase revenues while simplifying operations.

Benefits

By installing JAZZ Enterprise, Oakwood was able to reduce telecommunications call accounting costs by 75 percent. Meanwhile, the company estimates it will increase profits in 2001 by a half million dollars due to an increased ability to keep pace with market opportunities, an activity facilitated by the software’s pricing-plan tools and improved communications abilities.



Managing Tenant Telecom Revenues in "Real-Time" from a single point.

"super-user" product support directly to Oakwood's on-property technology managers. While server and network operations are managed by Oakwood, direct "super-user" support from SDD is available to Oakwood on-property staff direct for matters of product usage and best practices.

Built on Microsoft Windows® NT Server

JAZZ Enterprise leverages the scalability and stability of the Windows NT architecture. JAZZ today processes nearly a million tenant phone calls per month from a single Windows NT server. Those calls originate from 24 PBX's supporting 21 properties. JAZZ is accessible 24x7 to both corporate and on-property staffs. For future growth in system users and increases in Oakwood property holdings, JAZZ processes and workloads can be distributed across multiple Microsoft-powered servers.

JAZZ Enterprise's integration with Microsoft Windows® NT server and Oakwood's property management software expedited Oakwood's training of its accounting department and property management staff. The JAZZ interface closely resembles familiar Windows-based applications with which Oakwood employees were already familiar.

Making Communications Profitable

JAZZ was instrumental in making communications resale more profitable at both large and small-volume Oakwood properties.

McClements described how JAZZ helped Oakwood expand telecom profitability in an increasingly competitive telecom environment. "In the year and a half since implementation, the JAZZ Enterprise solution has reduced our cost to operate call accounting by 75 percent. Meanwhile, the software's flexibility and functionality is increasing our telephone revenues. In 2001, we estimate that our ability to execute on-the-fly price plan modifications will increase profits by an estimated half million dollars."

Oakwood's considerable return on investment was the result of being able to consolidate operational monitoring and controls onto the JAZZ Enterprise server while expanding the functionality and tools available to Oakwood telecom people. Oakwood people can now leverage on-demand information and customized billing and can focus on better serving tenants. The centralized data store and accounting functions are also supporting a higher-level business planning, an activity Oakwood expects will continue to evolve as more properties are added to their portfolio.

For more information

About Microsoft

Call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (800) 563-9048. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft office. For more information about Microsoft-based hospitality solutions, visit the Microsoft hospitality industry home page on the World Wide Web, at <http://www.microsoft.com/business/hospitality>.

About SDD Communications

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SDD develops and markets Internet and telephone billing systems for the owners and managers of commercial properties and facilities. SDD products operate in many of the largest and most prestigious hotels, convention centers, and tenant properties in the world. SDD products allow property owners, managers (or their third party service providers) to independently bill guests and tenants for their use of Internet and telephone services while on their property.

Microsoft Products and Services

- Microsoft Windows NT Server Terminal Server Enterprise Edition 4.0
- Microsoft Windows NT Workstation 4.0
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional
- Microsoft Windows 95
- Microsoft Windows 98
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 7.0 Enterprise Edition
- Microsoft Exchange Server 5.0
- Microsoft Office 2000
- Microsoft Internet Explorer™ 5.5
- Microsoft FrontPage®

About Oakwood

Oakwood Worldwide is a leading provider of corporate housing and serviced apartments with locations throughout North America, Asia and Europe. For worldwide reservations, call (800) 888-0808, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or visit our website at www.oakwood.com.

SDD Software and Services

JAZZ Enterprise Communications Accounting Server with the SDD Telemanagement Network Interface (TNI).

Third Party Software and Services

Progress Software Corporate databases and SDKs.

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