

## Canadian Royalties improves remote mining exploration with TalkSwitch

For Canadian Royalties Inc., the future lies under the frozen tundra of Northern Quebec. It rests in a series of rich nickel deposits below the surface of remote regions currently accessible only by helicopter and devoid of any settlement. And it is contingent upon efficient exploration work conducted by crews of up to 70 people who leave their towns and cities behind to work in camps virtually cut off from the rest of the world.

Glen Schlyter is the Operations Manager at Canadian Royalties, a Quebec-based mining exploration firm that has been prospecting in Canada's remote northern regions since 1998. He is responsible for maintaining efficient operations, which usually hinges on the flow of daily supplies and communications within and between camp sites and with head office in Val d'Or Québec.

Early in 2004, Schlyter's biggest concern was improving communications at Canadian Royalties' principal project, the Raglan South Nickel Project in the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec. Canadian Royalties had been exploring the 1000-square-kilometer project since 2001, and had populated it with a base camp and three, smaller, decentralized operating camps.

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Since its inception, communications at the Raglan site was limited to relatively expensive and inefficient mobile hand-held satellite-based voice and data service. In 2004, Schlyter streamlined the site's data requirements with a better approach to satellite-based data communications provided by RAMTelecom, a leading provider of VSAT IP-based data and voice communication services over satellite.

So when, Schlyter was ready to improve the Raglan site's voice network, RAMTelecom recommended a TalkSwitch Voice Over IP (VoIP) system.

### **The challenge**

"Voice communication is vital to the Raglan operation," Schlyter says. "It's important because it allows personnel in each camp to be able to share information about work progress and results with their colleagues in the other camps. It's important because it allows personnel to order critical parts for the heavy machinery they are operating and for basic necessities such as a groceries and essentials. And it's important because it gives the camps immediate access to head office and the outside world."

Schlyter wanted a reliable voice system that would be available at all times. The system he envisioned would offer personnel at each of the four Raglan camp sites the convenience of placing and receiving voice calls whenever needed, between the various buildings at each camp, between camps and to head office. Most importantly, he wanted a system that would reduce or eliminate the need to rely on expensive handheld satellite phones and air time, and provide more privacy and convenience than short-range UHF radios.

"The ideal solution would provide VoIP out-of-the-box and be robust enough to maintain that service under heavy use," says Gilles Desmarais, Vice-President and General Manager of RAMTelecom. "It needed to be compact, easy to transport and easy to configure. It also needed to work with very little or no maintenance, since it was going to be shipped to a remote area where it would be difficult for us to dispatch support personnel."

Based on its understanding of Schlyter's operation and on extensive knowledge of available voice telecommunications options, RAMTelecom knew that TalkSwitch had the right system for Canadian Royalties.

### **The solution**

With operations across the country, RAMTelecom supports a national customer base with mobile satellite telephony and VSAT IP-based broadband Internet services. It offers flexible and scalable carrier-class satellite communications solutions to a variety of mining, oil and gas, forestry and government clients operating in Canada's remote Northern regions.

"We understood Glen's needs because of the work we had done with other customers and with the data network at the Raglan site," says Desmarais. "So we knew that whatever we recommended needed to be configured once at head office, shipped up to the site, installed with minimal effort and be able to be remotely managed for maintenance purposes. The TalkSwitch system met all these requirements. In addition, it offered the power of VoIP and all the features and functionalities that the customer wanted."

RAMTelecom recommended a complete voice system built around the TalkSwitch 48-CVA at the main Raglan base camp. The TalkSwitch 48-CVA is a hybrid VoIP and PSTN telephone system that can support four incoming lines and four VoIP trunks as well as eight local and eight remote extensions. The 48-CVA was chosen because it can be expanded with additional TalkSwitch systems and interoperates with remote third party VoIP gateways such as MediaTrix.

MediaTrix gateways were integrated to extend the reach and benefits of the TalkSwitch 48-CVA to the remote camps. They economically integrated those locations with the base camp and enabled users to have the same features they would if they were sitting at base camp.

Finally, to round out the system, a TalkSwitch TS100 telephone was added at each extension location, and the entire network was connected to the outside world with three inbound/outbound VoIP lines provided through RAMTelecom's Enterprise level VoIP service.

### **The results**

"This complete solution from TalkSwitch was plug-and-play," Desmarais says. "We were able to pre-configure it at our offices, our customer was able to test it at their office, and then it was shipped directly to the site with complete, step-by-step installation instructions. Once it was installed, we were able to remotely access the systems right from our Network Operations Center. The system instantly improved communications between camps and with head office and the portable satellite phones that Canadian Royalties was using are now reserved for back up."

"One of the key benefits of the VoIP solution is that the voice system is always available," adds Schlyter. "Our personnel are no longer worried that the satellite phones may not connect, or that once they do get connected they will get disconnected in mid-conversation. They can pick up a handset at any time, place a call and get in touch with whoever they need to speak to."

Schlyter adds that the standard features and the flexibility of the TalkSwitch system make it an extremely powerful communications tool.

"The system is very easy to configure. We were able to quickly and easily take advantage of all the built in features such as three digit dialing between camp locations and storing voicemail locally. And we were able to customize it and program it to our unique needs. For example, the auto attendant is programmed to provide English or French menu options and prompting, which makes it very easy for personnel in the field to use. We also programmed it to give users the option to ring all extensions in all camp buildings at once in an emergency."

Schlyter says the new voice system has given head office more direct visibility into the site's daily operations. It has improved the ability of head office and site personnel to manage operational logistics and have all four camps at the site coordinate daily efforts and work as a complete unit rather than independent entities. Most importantly, it has improved supply chain management because personnel can now place calls to key external suppliers for everything from drill bits to pork chops.

"Based on usage and the extent to which the TalkSwitch system has improved our operations, I can say we have seen a 100% return on our investment in a matter of months," Schlyter concludes. "We've reduced our monthly communications expenses by over 50 per cent, while greatly improving communications for our employees and contractors."

#### **About TalkSwitch**

TalkSwitch® designs and develops award-winning phone systems for small, multi-location and franchise businesses. Since its establishment in 1990, TalkSwitch has dedicated itself to developing PBXs and IP PBXs that tens of thousands of small businesses across North America rely on. With a growing global network of resellers, distributors and partners, TalkSwitch phones and phone systems are changing the way small businesses communicate. For more information, please visit our website at [www.talkswitch.com](http://www.talkswitch.com), or call us toll-free in the United States and Canada at 1.888.332.9322. In all other markets call +1.613.725.2980.

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