

8x8 Cuts Long Distance Costs for Corporate Housing Company

AHI Group switches to 8x8 to lower costs but gains business continuity and improved availability to their clients



When people ask what AHI stands for, the company answers with one word: service. For more than 20 years, AHI has offered world-class housing and related services to corporate and individual clients. These services include providing fully furnished temporary homes for clients that need to relocate, as well as property management services for the homes they leave behind.

Making People Feel at Home

“Companies often come to us when they need to relocate an employee, or hire a consultant or intern who needs short-term housing for 30 days or more,” explained Cheri Jenkins, general manager at AHI. “We also get individual clients who are separating from their spouses and need furnished apartments. Our housing is more upscale and has more amenities than the typical furnished place. Basically, we take care of everything so the client can settle in and feel at home immediately”.

Paying Too Much for Too Little

With offices located in Atlanta, Birmingham, Chattanooga, Cincinnati, Huntsville, Lexington, Louisville, Memphis, Mobile, Montgomery, Nashville, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, AHI was spending a lot of money on long distance calls. What’s more, the company’s legacy phone system didn’t allow employees to have direct telephone numbers. When Jenkins mentioned these issues to a family member familiar with the latest trends in cloud-based communications, she got a succinct piece of advice: contact 8x8.

Jenkins took the advice, and in June 2010 AHI installed a new 8x8 phone system. The company ordered about 80 extensions for its employees, as well as a main line and 800 number for each of its offices.

“Before installing 8x8 we increased our upload and download speeds by switching our offices from DSL to a faster cable Internet connection,” said Jenkins. “That made our 8x8 installation quick and easy—all we had to do was turn on the 8x8 phones.”

AHI GROUP

Customer: AHI Group

Industry: Housing services

Locations: Atlanta, Birmingham, Chattanooga, Cincinnati, Huntsville, Lexington, Louisville, Memphis, Mobile, Montgomery, Nashville, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

8x8 Products: 8x8 Virtual Office

Website: theahigroup.com



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—**Cheri Jenkins**
General Manager
AHI Group

Extension Dialing Lowers Long Distance Costs

Corporate housing is a seasonal business, and peak relocation months are March through August. During that season, Jenkins estimates that 8x8 saves AHI \$6,000 a month on telephone charges. Even during off-peak months, the company realizes savings of about \$2,500 a month.

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Jenkins noted that extension dialing has also improved communication between AHI's corporate headquarters and its satellite offices.

Standard Features Enhance Productivity

But 8x8 has done more than just lower AHI's telephone costs. Standard features included with 8x8's core offering have significantly increased employee productivity. According to Jenkins, one of the most helpful features is auto attendant.

“We use several phone numbers and call routing schemes for our offices because we offer a range of housing services to both corporate and individual clients,” said Jenkins. “8x8 referred us to a company that records professional prompts, which gives our business a competitive edge when clients call.

Presence detection is another standard 8x8 feature that has had a positive impact on AHI. The company's receptionist can now see when employees in all eight cities are on the phone or available, enabling her to route calls appropriately.

And 8x8's mobile app for iPhones, iPads and Android devices is popular with users across the company.

“With 8x8, our employees can use their cell phones to take business calls without giving out their cell phone numbers,” said Jenkins. “The mobile app makes their Android or iPhone look like their 8x8 office phone. It's a win-win because it enables us to be more responsive to clients while protecting our employees' privacy.”

Ensuring Business Continuity in the Storm Belt

Most of AHI's offices are scattered across the southeastern U.S., a region subject to tornados and hurricanes. In 2011, the company's Huntsville, Alabama, office lost power when a tornado struck nearby Tuscaloosa, and in 2012, the Mobile, Alabama, office lost power during a hurricane. During both outages, AHI seamlessly rolled incoming calls over to other offices, ensuring that clients were able to reach a live person when they called.

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“Because of our geography, we know that natural disasters are bound to happen sooner or later,” said Jenkins. “8x8 makes it easy for us to keep our business running even if there’s a bad storm and we lose power at some of our locations.”

AHI recently leveraged 8x8’s rollover capability to set up a virtual office in Lexington, Kentucky. Callers use local Lexington phone numbers to contact AHI, but the calls are actually serviced by the company’s office in Louisville, Kentucky.

“By setting up a virtual office we can be listed in Google Places and other business directories without leasing a brick-and-mortar office,” explained Jenkins. “That allows us to expand our business and provide local contact numbers while keeping overhead low.”

Ramping up for the Future

Reflecting back on her experience with 8x8 over the past few years, Jenkins noted that she and her team had no prior experience with hosted VoIP or web-based telephony before switching to 8x8.

“There was some ramp up time as we educated ourselves about our new 8x8 phone service,” she said. “Fortunately I have a brilliant office manager who quickly figured out how to manage the system. She can even log in from home and make changes whenever we need them!”

Jenkins also noted that 8x8 service and tech support have been rock-solid since AHI made the switch. Asked whether the company plans to expand its 8x8 service, Jenkins said that AHI will be opening more satellite offices soon, and when they do, “8x8 will go with us so we can continue to provide world-class service to clients as we grow.”

Find out how 8x8 can help your business. Call **1.866.862.2811** or visit **www.8x8.com**

