



CASE STUDY

# **iTel Networks Integrates Remote Working Capacity to Support Growth**

With the inclusion of remote working positions, iTel was able to expand their talent pool for recruitment and access new markets while minimizing the cost of expansion.

## **CHALLENGE:**

As iTel expanded, recruiting the right people was becoming more difficult. With Headquarters in Kamloops, BC, local candidate selection was limited and there was sometimes resistance to moving to a location that many were unfamiliar with. Getting the experience and talent necessary to support growth meant that expanding the talent pool was a priority.

As Remote Workers came on board, new challenges appeared. VPN access to network drives is notoriously unstable and accessing adequate bandwidth for some residential addresses was difficult. Additionally, integrating with a new team via phone was not as effective as in-person meetings, and a better method was required.

## **SOLUTION:**

Adding Remote Working potential for many positions meant iTel could access a much larger talent pool without the expense of launching new office locations. It also meant that employees from other locations brought access to new networks via their existing, local relationships. Specifically, having sales people able to take in-person client meetings without extensive travel was an advantage.

## Executive Summary

**Company:** iTel Networks Inc.

**Business:** Converged Networking Services

**Location:** Kamloops, BC, Canada

### **Challenge**

- Struggled to recruit and retain talent as the company grew.
- Integrating remote positions technically and interpersonally.

### **Solution**

- Open-up positions to remote working potential.
- Leverage the cloud, Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS), and SD-WAN to support remote workers.

### **Result**

- Recruited an experienced team with access to new geographic markets.
- No cost of launching new offices or travel for existing team.
- Implemented new technology to create seamless access to corporate tools and resources – supporting continued innovation and removing the barriers of distance.

Moving network drives to cloud systems, bonding internet connections via SD-WAN, and implementing a Unified Communications platform – with an emphasis on video calling – made onboarding and integrating remote workers a smoother process.

## RESULT:

**RECRUITMENT:** With positions having the potential to be fully remote, iTel was able to recruit an experienced and well-connected team in Eastern Canada. Steve Hogben joined iTel from his home in Ontario as Sales Manager in 2019, bringing with him a network of connections in a market that iTel had minimal presence in before. Leveraging that network, Steve was able to build up a strong team in Eastern Canada and open up new business opportunities for iTel. Other positions – including some harder to recruit for specialized technical positions – were able to be filled as the talent pool was no longer restricted to the BC Interior.

*When you can be more flexible about their location, employees can live where they want to live – and as an employer, not only can you hire from a larger talent pool, but you have more satisfied employees.*

**Nicky Scott**, Human Resources Manager, iTel Networks

Additionally, iTel was able to retain talent as employees' lives changed. Heather Sutherland, Director of Business Development, was faced with relocating as her husband's job took him out of town. Taking her position fully remote meant iTel was able to retain her experience and talent.

**CLOUD DRIVES:** VPNs can be unreliable, and troubleshooting the connection can be time consuming, particularly for a new user. iTel transitioned away from network drives, moving files and applications to the cloud – drastically reducing the need for VPN across the organization. Work continues on making more systems and tools accessible through browsers and hosted in the cloud.

**UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS:** Video conferencing was a major advantage for the remote team. Being able to see the person you're talking to added a dimension to the conversation that had been sorely missed.

Kelly Pritchard, iTel's VP of Sales and Marketing, was one of the first employees to join the company in a fully remote position. She found that real change began when the company upgraded to an enterprise license for their communications platform – making video calling the default for meetings leveled the playing field for remote employees. Once video was no longer an additional step, it was significantly easier to engage in meetings and conversations.

Video alone was important, but a fully integrated communications platform – including chat and email – was also beneficial. Ensuring that remote staff are accessible when you can't just walk over to their desk allowed communication to be fluid, and having a cloud-based system that can be used on a variety of devices and operating systems made it possible.

**SD-WAN:** All the cloud-based solutions in the world could be for nothing if remote employees don't have access to reliable, stable internet connections. Heather struggled with adequate bandwidth as her relocation took her to a small, rural community. With the installation of an SD-WAN appliance she was able to bond multiple connections, resulting in increased speeds and reduced latency – ie, clearer video and improved sound quality.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As iTel continues to grow and evolve, supporting remote work will propel the company forward. Steve finds that the people who are best suited to remote working environments are entrepreneurial by nature, and ensuring these people are empowered with robust tools will continue to drive innovation and creativity across the company.

*Working remotely can make you much more efficient and focused as you don't tend to be so distracted. I've also found that my work-life balance is better – There's a stress level that you take away when you're not white-knuckling it through traffic for so long, and without the commute every day I can be more available for my kids.*

**Steve Hogben**, Director of Sales, iTel Networks

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