

Iwatsu Furnishes Wickes with Reliability, Innovation

Wickes Furniture Company, Inc., a private corporation with annual revenues exceeding \$300 million, is a retail furniture chain with thirty-six stores distributed in six major market areas around the country—Chicago, Minneapolis, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Portland. One of the largest furniture retailers in the nation, Wickes has achieved a steady growth rate since the company began in 1971 by emphasizing customer service through responsiveness of their sales agents and customer service staff. To fulfill requirements in both areas, Wickes has relied on telephone systems from Iwatsu for almost 12 years.

"We bought our first Iwatsu PBX in 1988 after carefully reviewing a number of alternative vendors—and it's a good thing we did because many of those vendors are no longer around," says Frank Wega, Director of Facility Operations at Wickes, Wheeling, Illinois headquarters. "But, in addition to being a stable vendor, Iwatsu has always provided us with stable platforms. After more than a decade of service from our Iwatsu telephone switches, the only time we ever needed support was when the occasional telephone needed replacing." However, even this event occurs rarely. "I really like the Iwatsu handsets", Wega says. "They're not lightweight and cheap like so many competing telephones, and they convey a feeling of quality when talking on them. Plus they almost never breakdown—or even fail."

This track record of quality is what motivated Wickes to stay with Iwatsu and implement the ADIX when recently upgrading telephone systems at 26 stores. "It's not that the old systems



Wickes Furniture Company, one of the United States leading furniture sales corporations, continues to grow with Iwatsu's ADIX system.

weren't working well—they did just fine," Wega explains. "But the company wanted a more flexible solution that leveraged new technology which just was not available 12 years ago."

"We were embarking on a major program to remodel our stores, so it was a good time to install an upgraded telephone system that supported both voicemail and auto-attendant features. We also needed to relocate extensions," he says. "We'd been installing Iwatsu's ADIX (which offered these capabilities) in new stores since the platform was first released in 1996, so it was an obvious choice for the chain-wide upgrades."

To implement the new platforms, Wickes turned to



the group of seven of Iwatsu resellers around the country that they had been relying on for a number of years. "These guys are in the business of staying in business, and they would not risk losing my business by selling me a product that they thought was inferior. I put faith in them to sell quality products. They, in turn, put their faith in Iwatsu."

Wega's first call was to Rocco Ruggieri, president of Interwest Communications Corporation in Dallas, Texas. Interwest was the reseller that installed Wickes' very first Iwatsu solution in 1988. "A good product sells itself," Ruggieri says, "so selling ADIX solutions is really simple and supporting them is even easier because there are seldom any problems. In fact, I sometimes feel like the Maytag repair man."

Each store with an ADIX currently has between thirty and thirty-five telephone extensions and eight incoming lines. ADIX Voicemail is available for all extensions. In Wickes' largest facilities, including customer service offices in each major market region, additional lines are utilized. The ADIX ACD is used to efficiently route calls to the first available agent. The ADIX switch in these facilities is also linked to all stores sites in its market area through Centrex services

that provide four-digit dialing in a geographic region. This feature allows customer service agents to easily route calls.

"If a customer calls our customer service center with a question about their credit history," Wega says, "the agent answering the call might not have that information available. With the Centrex services available through the ADIX, that caller can be easily and immediately routed to our credit office at a different facility."

Clearly, Wickes Furniture is looking forward to many more years of service from their Iwatsu telephone systems. "It's safe to say that we're now standardized on the ADIX," Wega says, "Any time we add a store or facility, it will also rely on this same platform."

"We're fortunate. We originally selected Iwatsu products because they served us very well," he continues. "The simplicity, durability, and longevity of the system and the telephones themselves have made my job a lot easier by keeping my customers satisfied. We could have purchased a solution that cost a lot less, but we believe in paying for quality. And that's just what we got with the Iwatsu ADIX."

"With competing vendors, I just would not have that level of comfort." ←

