

Idler's Home Success Story

Furnishing a Personal Touch for Generations



Challenge

- Phone system outages that frustrated customers
- Transaction interruptions with POS payments
- Unreliable Internet across store locations

Solution

- New voice, Wi-Fi, and Dedicated Internet Access package
- 1G high-speed fiber line enabling cloud-based communications
- Seamless integration across multiple locations

Results

- Customer service operations restored and enhanced
- Sales team now leveraging cell and store phone integration
- Revenue climbed measurably since changeover

Connecting with Community

Family-owned and operated for three generations (and counting), Idler's Home has proudly served the tri-county communities of California's Central Coast—San Luis Obispo county, Southern Monterey county and Northern Santa Barbara county—with home goods and furnishings of superior quality and lasting value. As many of their customers' children have come to age surrounded by Idler's products, they too have turned to Idler's when starting their families and furnishing their first homes.

It's a tradition of one family serving countless others for decades, a steadfast commitment to their communities that Idler's has never taken for granted. So, with such a generational legacy of customer and neighborhood loyalty to protect and to pass on, when Idler's communications system began failing, compromising customer service, they needed to act immediately to preserve that invaluable connection to community.

The Challenge: Restoring Communications and Customer Care

"In this day and age, connectivity is essential, of course, to serving our customers and communities," shares Gabe Hedges, general manager of Idler's Home. "When the phone stops working and you keep losing internet, plus the connection to your point-of-sale payment system goes down—in retail, that's an unsustainable situation, for any length of time."

In a consumer sector where neighborhood brick and mortar stores must increasingly defend their territories against encroaching national and global stores online, that personal customer touch has always been what sets Idler's apart. This central core value and differentiating business driver was being put at risk by the inconsistencies of a large, yet, also largely undependable telecom provider, with unreliable products and sketchy customer service.

The Solution: Being Local Made the Difference

Idler's management team learned of Astound through a colleague at the local chamber of commerce. With an office and customer service team taking care of the same communities, Astound's location checked off a crucial box on Idler's search criteria checklist. A phased but rapid deployment to a fiber-based cloud communications system, featuring Astound's Hosted Voice, Business Class Internet, Dedicated Internet Access, and Ethernet products, was put into place. Yes, it was quite literally a family affair: Members of the Astound family were now helping Idler's family to better help

its customers' families, all of which reinforced Idler's own commitment to community.

"As a local business ourselves, we always try to support other local businesses," says Hedges, "so the fit just felt right. And the communications products have surely served us well." In the spirit of preserving that high-touch/high-trust experience, which is such a mainstay component to Idler's success, Hedges notes, "I have my Astound rep's cell number on my phone, and he has mine, and he always picks up when we need him."

"And the best part is: My staff and I no longer have to think about the system, because everything just works. This frees us to focus on what we do best, which is serving our customers."

The Result: "Getting everything working seamlessly on a cloud system."

With phones, payment systems, and Internet service now connected and integrated across four locations, plus a distribution center, implementation had proven a massive undertaking. "Honestly," admits Hedges, "the owner was nerve-racked about the risk of business interruption, but our teams had jointly planned it all out, stage by stage. At the end of the three-day rollout, I have to say, I was very impressed with how smoothly and seamlessly it all went. At each location, we were never down for more than 10 minutes at changeover, and our other stores picked up call traffic whenever we were."

Although team members now never miss a beat—by getting voicemails as emails, or being able to make, receive, and transfer calls between store handsets and cell phones—system reliability continues to be the most appreciated feature of all. "We haven't had the phone system go down even once since replacement. And the best part is: My staff and I no longer have to think about the system, because everything just works. This frees us to focus on what we do best, which is serving our customers."

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