

# CASE STUDY:

Reducing Distractions and Protecting Speech Privacy in a Large and Busy Modern Office



Applied Systems

## Challenge

### Acoustical Issues in the New Open Office Space

Founded in 1983, the Applied Systems group of companies is recognized as a pioneer in insurance automation and data exchange between brokerages, insurers and clients, with more than 1,300 staff members worldwide and servicing more than 14,000 clients in North America and Europe.

Having recently relocated the European headquarters into a smart facility at Trafalgar Place, Brighton that utilized an open-plan office environment, Applied Systems immediately identified acoustical issues in the new space.

Rita Swaffield, Office Manager for Applied Systems UK in Brighton, commented, "The new offices are larger and more open in design than our previous location. Applied Systems prides itself on customer service, which means we must ensure colleagues are able to conduct telephone calls and conversations in a confidential setting and carry out work free from distraction. We decided to implement sound masking measures as part of our overall commitment to privacy and confidentiality, as well as the well-being of our staff."

“The introduction [of sound masking] has almost created an ‘invisible audio partition’ between our customer experience teams and our software development teams – essential in open plan environments. This allows software development teams to work without being distracted by telephone conversations taking place amongst customer experience teams and vice-versa.”

Lucy Sargent  
Customer Experience Manager  
Applied Systems UK

# Solution

## Qt® 600 Sound Masking System

Tasked with providing and managing the solution, Gary Eke, IT Support Analyst for Applied Systems UK, called upon the services of Briant Communications to design, supply and install a multi-zone sound masking solution for the new office. Briant Communications contacted Sound Directions Ltd, UK importers for Cambridge Sound Management products, to produce the system design for the sound masking system to be installed at Applied Systems UK.

A Qt® 600 Sound Masking System from Cambridge Sound Management was installed, out of office hours during the course of a weekend, ensuring business continuity. The sound masking system was commissioned during a subsequent visit to the location during office hours.

The sound masking solution from Cambridge Sound Management introduces additional layers of sound to an environment, tuned to the frequencies and amplitudes of human speech, masking excessive speech noise and allowing environments where it is introduced to become more comfortable, private and free of excessive distractions.

A number of small, barely visible sound masking emitters are installed in the ceiling tiles throughout the open plan office areas, management offices, meeting rooms and conference facilities, and are strategically positioned to provide optimum coverage. Cables from the emitters in each zone are daisy chained and fed back to the Qt® 600 control module located in the office's on-site server room.

Gary Eke adds, "The control element of the sound masking system from Cambridge Sound Management sits on our existing IT infrastructure, which allows us to access it via a PC on our internal network and set levels in each zone as required," says Elke. "We regularly hold company meetings in the open plan office areas and need to adjust the system to allow the presenter to be heard across the entire office. The network control of the system allows this to happen easily."

## Result

Benefits for Applied Systems UK of the installed sound masking system include reductions of general conversation levels across the open plan offices, a quieter work area for software development teams utilizing the open plan office environment, and enhanced privacy and confidentiality for telephone conversations, conference calls and meetings.

Lucy Sargent, Customer Experience Manager for Applied Systems UK, adds, "I was a little skeptical a sound masking system would provide us with the benefits required, but the introduction has almost created an 'invisible audio partition' between our customer experience teams and our software development teams – essential in open plan environments. This allows software development teams to work without being distracted by telephone conversations taking place amongst customer experience teams and vice-versa."



With an ever-increasing emphasis on and recognition of the correlations between employee well-being and workplace performance, the introduction of sound masking systems in the workplace to enhance employee well-being can potentially improve workplace performance.

"It also feels like privacy and confidentiality has improved, as it seems less likely for one to be distracted by other telephone conversations, and customers are less likely to hear background noise in the office. Consequently, the environment feels calmer and less frenetic," concludes Sargent.

Hanieh Motamedian, Business Development Manager for Sound Directions UK, adds, "I have a personal history of suffering with occasional tinnitus and my own experience with sound masking systems suggests an almost immediate improvement when I'm in an environment with a sound masking system from Cambridge Sound installed."

"I shall also be exploring other well-being in the workplace benefits of a sound masking system, as this is a particular passion of mine – after all we all spend a lot of our time in workplace environments".

## About Applied Systems

Applied Systems is the leading global provider of cloud-based software that powers the business of insurance. Recognized as a pioneer in insurance automation and the innovation leader, Applied is the world's largest provider of agency and brokerage management systems, serving customers throughout the United States, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom. By automating the insurance lifecycle, Applied's people and products enable millions of people around the world to safeguard and protect what matters most.

## About Briant Communications

Briant Communications Ltd is based in the South East of England and for over the past 30 years has been setting the standards in the Domestic and Commercial Aerial & Satellite Television Reception Industry. They continue to provide a first-class service to thousands of residents across Sussex, Surrey, South London, Hampshire, and Kent.

## About Sound Directions

Sound Directions are exclusive distributors for a number of prestigious brand partners including Ashly, Cambridge Sound Management, Auvitran, Fulcrum Acoustic and SoundTube. Specializing in Directional Sound, Sound Masking and System Design, they are able to support trade customers with expert product advice in these sometimes complex areas.

## About Cambridge Sound Management

The world leader in commercial sound masking, Cambridge Sound Management, Inc. manufactures QtPro and DynasoundPro sound masking systems to help organizations protect speech privacy, reduce noise distractions, and fuel workplace productivity in their offices. Its next-generation sound masking systems work by emitting a uniform, barely perceptible background sound at the frequencies of human speech. The systems also include office paging and background music capabilities to help facilities meet all of their masking and audio needs with one affordable system. Cost effective and easy to install, Cambridge Sound Management's systems are deployed in over 15,000 organizations' spaces throughout the world including commercial businesses, healthcare facilities, financial services, government agencies, and educational institutions.

## Case Study Overview

### SPACE

Large open office space.

### CHALLENGE

Speech privacy and noise distraction concerns.

### SOLUTION

Qt® 600 Sound Masking System



### RESULT

An office environment where it's easier to concentrate while keeping conversations held in the open area from being overheard.