

VoIP: A Technology for Business Pragmatists

We know many business owners who say they hate new technology. They tell us they'd rather go the dentist for a root canal than evaluate and adopt a new technology for their business. But, they say they go through the pain anyway. Why?

One of our clients put it this way, "We're pragmatists. Like it or not, we make the investments that will keep us competitive and offer realistic cost take-out opportunity. Yes, we've invested in VoIP for just those reasons - and a few others, as well."

Is VoIP Right for Your Business?

That depends on a variety of factors and only you can say. So, we are bringing you a concise review of major factors that are driving businesses of all sizes, and across all industries to adopt VoIP for their businesses.

Obsolescence and the Strategic Direction of VoIP

Major carriers, equipment vendors and services providers - the bulk of the current \$300 billion per year telecommunications industry - are migrating to IP Telephony on the local-area-network LAN side of the industry and to packetized VoIP services on the wide-area-network (WAN) side. Long story made short, the march toward obsolescence has begun. The time will come when the conventional telephony systems providers are outdated and obsolescence issues will begin to cause business owners significant problems. For instance, the providers of "the old technology" will raise prices to cover the costs of maintaining legacy systems - and pass along those costs to you.

Cost-Effective and Feature-Rich Options

Traditional telephony features have hooked just about everyone. For instance, we are all dependent on our voicemail and we regularly use call transfer, forwarding, and three-way calling features.

The number and type of VoIP calling features are dramatically increased over and above traditional telephony. They all come at no additional cost because they are IP-based which means they are carried over a computer network and can be thought of much like computer applications (think of your desktop programs, for instance.) This new platform opens up a world of possibilities for streamlining operations

- VoIP is *not* a technology looking for a problem to solve - it's a response to essential needs
- What are the primary business drivers of VoIP adoption - learn more
- A glimpse into the new frontiers of VoIP applications

Not all business problems have a technological answer, but when they do, that is the more lasting solution.

Andrew Grove, Intel Co-founder

and better serving your customers or clients.

We recommend knowing about VoIP, truly understanding the possibilities, because therein lies the business path to both cost take-out and competitive prowess. (By the way, if this seems like a daunting task, remember that we are here to help. As entrepreneurs and fellow business owners ourselves, we understand the “new technology dilemma” and we’ve developed ways to “short-cut” your learning curve.)

Flexibility/Portability - Enabling “Anywhere” Work

Like it or not, we all operate in a business environment where quick responses and timely communications are not just expected—they are demanded. Staying “well connected” is a must for business success. VoIP provides transparent access to real-time communications and productivity-enhancing features. It enables such options as “point and- click” dialing, interfaces through wireless extensions to cellular devices, and “follow me” features. Professionals can have calls ring at both their office and cell phone/PDA devices so they never miss a call.

Further, when your company operates in an IP-converged communications world, an employee can travel to any company location, plug in their IP-enabled laptop, begin working and make and receive telephone calls. Employees have instant access to all of the communications features available to them at their home office location. Imagine being relieved of the resource demand and often complex requirements to accommodate “visiting workers”.

Real-Time Collaboration

Using VoIP technology, Web applications using the Internet can now run over the company-based IP-network for communications, making many HTML applications portable. This means that users can add video conferencing, as an example, powered by IP video application software, to enable a desktop PC or laptop to emulate an IP office phone. It is notable that many professionals comment on the superior quality of this video and audio option versus that which they experience over the Internet. As any good manager can attest, giving employees “better options” is the best way to change the behaviors required to save money. So, it is possible to realize reductions in teleconferencing and videoconferencing costs. (In general, non-VoIP forms of these types of conferencing formats are more costly and offer lesser quality.)

Leveraging Available Bandwidth

When you are running a fast-paced, growing business, bandwidth matters. Though it may seem almost counter-intuitive, adding IP Telephony/VoIP to an enterprise computer network, will result in better bandwidth performance. Even though converged networks that add IP Telephony/VoIP increase overall network traffic volume, experience tells us that successful implementation of the technology actually helps to maintain a steady - better - mode of operation and does a superior job of using available bandwidth.

Users have noted gaining multiple times the bandwidth equivalent using VoIP when compared to plain-old-telephone systems using their wide-area-network. (There are a variety of deeply technical factors to evaluate and align properly in a successful VoIP implementation and we are here to help with that need; our experience makes all the difference.)

Network Management: Better Performance from a Key Asset

Very real dollars are invested in the people and systems that keep a company network fine-tuned to support successful company operations. The network is one of those little-understood and frequently overlooked assets that becomes a hot topic only when it’s down. Among the many points of good news about IP-based communication networks is that they make it much easier - and more predictable - to keep the all-important company network humming. When you give VoIP the nod as the next important investment for your company, it comes with many “unanticipated benefits” and we think superior network management is a very important one. From significant ease-of-use factors that the network manager will appreciate, to high impact computer-based tools that manage the network better than ever before, this

“behind the scenes” capability provides big benefits.

Compelling Applications: Ones That Only VoIP Can Make Possible

VoIP business users can look forward to improved communications, all of the benefits of convergence, plus the convenience that comes from integration of their cell phone, desk phone, PC, PDA , etc. No doubt about it, VoIP dives business performance and innovation.

Just as the desktop PC and portable computers gave us the huge benefit of powerful applications from software vendors and Internet sites, so does VoIP open up a host of interesting opportunities.

Here’s a glimpse at the VoIP-enabled applications frontier.

Call Mapping - one VoIP application software provider allows you to see the geographic location of your connected calls.

Caller ID on TV - one software vendor lets you create the ultimate caller ID.

Transfer Voicemail to Email and consolidate your messages - several vendors have devised a way to transfer messages from your voicemail box to your email inbox automatically.

Call Recording - most VoIP solutions have a built in recording system

Call Encrypting to Protect Privacy & Data - to protect your privacy, assets and company secrets call encryption is easily installed through several software companies specializing in this niche.

Document Editing - and collaborating on documents with someone at a distance. Several providers allow you to type, draw, erase, point and change anything within the shared document. Combine this with a video conference and you have a great virtual meeting.

Desktop Sharing - need to give a presentation while at a distance? A few software providers have taken document collaboration to the next level allowing users to share entire desktops while engaging in VoIP calls - a great tool for presentations, troubleshooting, and long distance conferencing.

Bluetooth Integration - synchronizing calls with Bluetooth for hands free operation is extremely easy and several website offer directions.

Summary

In this briefing, we have shared our views about the dynamics that are driving VoIP adoption by business owners who are taking an investment oriented, long-term view of this technology for their enterprise. There are powerful benefits to be gained from introducing VoIP into your business. Whether you are ready now for the VoIP business environment, or you are just now doing the research for a future decision, we can be a valuable resource. Call on us to help you better understand VoIP - it’s benefits and how to best implement it in your unique situation.

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