



Vol.7 Number 2
February 2007

Staying Connected in a SIP-enabled World

Could you envision a benefit to condensing all of your business contact numbers, including office extension and cell phone, down into one? Would it help your productivity if you could hold a phone conversation while on the go throughout your office complex-while still on your regular office extension? Now what if you could continue that conversation offsite, while still using the same phone? That's what SIP, deployed over your company's wireless network infrastructure, can deliver.

SIP and wireless networking can migrate your workforce to a much simpler and more efficient way of working. The key is in using these technologies together for maximum effect. SIP stands for Session Initiated Protocol and it enables disparate phone systems to communicate with each other. If you deploy a traditional wireless network with wireless handsets, you can move freely about the building, but that's it. With a SIP-enabled wireless infrastructure, a user can move throughout your corporate office-and far beyond.

There are two new SIP-related technologies coming out over the next year that enable this. The first are SIP handsets that have a very high degree of connectivity. The phones operate wirelessly over your corporate LAN when you are in the building. But when you leave the building, you can still access the network through any public access point, such as the wireless network in a coffee shop. Once connected to the outside network, the phone can make and receive calls through your normal desk extension. This is a great way to cut down on cellular minutes and long distance charges.

The other new type of handset is a SIP-enabled "dual mode" phone. This is one mobile phone that can switch between cellular coverage and your internal wireless network automatically. This means that no matter where you go, you are connected. When in the office, the handset detects your wireless network and calls are routed through your VPN. When on the road, the handset switches over to cellular. This makes for the most cost effective use of your network and eliminates the need to pay for a separate landline, wireless network and cell phone. And it is even more cost effective if your company already plans uses a wireless network for your data traffic anyway.

What to watch out for

When shopping for a SIP-enabled wireless vendor, there are several factors to keep in mind. The first is thing is to ensure that your new telephony infrastructure is capable of supporting a broad set of features. Traditionally, SIP technology has provided very limited calling features. But there are vendors now offering SIP networks that will enable



handsets to have every feature you have come to expect from a traditional landline network—such as inter-office paging, transfer, hold and more.

Next, you must be sure of the capability of your wireless access points. Currently, most wireless access point can only handle 4-5 simultaneous calls at one time. Any more, and call quality begins to suffer. But there are new products coming into the market that can enable up to 20 simultaneous calls on one access point. And be sure your phone handsets are capable of transferring easily from one access point to another.

Finally, there is the issue of security. There are always security concerns with voice/data information being sent over a wireless network. Encryption technology to secure your communications is available, but it can be expensive. It's best to perform a usage analysis to determine the type of information you are sharing over the phone and decide whether secure wireless voice communications are really in your best interest.

True "go anywhere" phones are coming. A SIP-enabled wireless phone simply maximizes your calling options. Just do your homework and you can gain access to a powerful tool that keeps you connected wherever your business takes you. And with the host of the unified messaging technologies now available, you can raise your personal productivity to a level you never thought possible, where the sky really is the limit.

