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## VoIP:

### Can a converged architecture work for you?

Operating a converged network that combines VoIP with a traditional phone system is one of the most economical ways to migrate your company to a VoIP environment. And your business can usually start realizing the benefits of VoIP much quicker. The one problem with this model is that traditional VoIP applications are tough to deploy in this type of environment. This used to mean your team had to wait for functionality such as unified messaging applications, interactive voice response, automatic call distribution and multi-party conferencing. Either that, or costly third-party solutions had to be put into place.

Fortunately a new converged applications model has come about that can address the limitations of converged communications networks. Built around a unified server, this new converged applications environment offers pre-integrated applications on the same server architecture to reduce the number of devices and integration points. This means a lower total cost of ownership to get the applications you need.

The scope of these applications is well beyond typical IP-PBXs and soft switches. You can get must-have features ranging from basic telephony applications including call forwarding and conferencing, to more sophisticated features such as screen-pop, skills-based routing, Internet text chat, and Web callback. It has been estimated that reduced user and system features resulting from migration to VoIP can increase costs by as much as 50 percent of the initial technology investment. Those costs can be eliminated with this new model.

This new converged applications model is based on an independent applications layer. That means it can enable contact centers to choose from a variety of platform vendors. Contact centers now have the means to establish hybrid architectures, composed of both circuit- and IP-based networks. Traditional switching methods can be used for internal communications, while taking advantage of IP-based cost savings for mobile employees.

#### What's needed to make it happen?

If your current network uses disparate, proprietary servers, running different applications linked loosely together using middleware, then you need to reexamine your network infrastructure. VoIP based on a converged communications model is not designed to resolve the challenges associated with deploying, maintaining, and customizing multi-channel applications across separate servers. And it will not further the cause of open systems.



The bottom line is that your team can realize substantial benefits in productivity, and your organization can realize a substantial reduction in operational costs with converged VoIP. But your IT resources must have the proper network deployment plan in place before you can start reaping the benefits of VoIP. Most companies cannot afford to start from scratch and deploy a completely new network optimized for VoIP. Usually, your existing network is evaluated and enhanced to integrate with VoIP technology.

### **What can you do to help?**

You need to report any problems to your IT department, and to your VoIP vendor. This will aid in their network testing and evaluation. It will help them to diagnose network and equipment issues quicker, and empower them to develop strategies to compensate and correct for the problem. If the proper amount of testing and tuning is performed on your network during deployment, and it continues on a regular maintenance basis, you will have reliable and high-quality VoIP infrastructure.

A VoIP network can deliver a solid reduction in phone and long distance costs. And your team can have single point access to e-mail, voice-mail and fax communications. This means e-mail can be heard over the phone, and voice messages can be sent over e-mail or the Internet. The flexibility, affordability and mobility delivered by VoIP makes the deployment effort well worthwhile.

There are many different architecture options when deploying VoIP. While that does mean the range of application availability and cost savings can vary, you still can realize solid benefits even from a mild VoIP execution.

