

## Campus Networking: IT Strategies for Success

If you're tasked with deploying a Campus Network (seamless multi-site communications network), don't despair. A Campus Network can reduce your voice communications infrastructure costs and enable you to build real process improvement into your organization. The key is to define what a real Campus Network is, and to separate it out from poorly conceived systems that may actually cause more issues than they resolve.

A Campus Network consists of multiple systems linked across point-to-point managed network connections, such as T1 lines, in a fully transparent network. It can exist in a PBX TDM environment, or it can operate as a VoIP system thanks to digital signal processors. But the key to what defines a true Campus Network is its ability to offer 100% transparency.

Many vendors will offer basic functionality such as 4-digit dialing or a centralized voicemail system with their product. But to access Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) and other mission-critical applications, you need to install separate equipment in each and every office. Suddenly, the idea of a "Campus" network loses its appeal, as you now have to maintain a separate system in each of your business locations. This means increased infrastructure costs and integration challenges as you try to keep all of these disparate systems operating in synch. But the biggest obstacle is the fact that many vendors will charge separate licensing fees for every application used at every location, exponentially increasing the financial burden of the overall network.


When you are searching for a Campus Network vendor, it is critical to ask whether they offer 100% transparency, and to clarify exactly how they define "100%". Campus Networking done right means that voice communications in every office should operate seamlessly. All intra-company calls should be intercom calls as if they were intra-office. All inbound callers should be able to dial one main number and reach anyone within the company, regardless of where their actual desk may be. And any call center employee or receptionist should be able to receive any call, thus enabling you to distribute your inbound calls and load balance in the most effective way possible.

A centralized Campus Network also has an advantage in survivability. If there is a network outage in one office, all of the essential phone applications will remain unaffected, as they are housed in a separate and safe location.

### Network Issues

If you plan to deploy an IP Campus Network across a VoIP environment, network optimization is essential to success. You must examine your current VPN and WAN capabilities. Look at current bandwidth availability, and compare to your current data traffic levels. Then compare that to your

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estimated needs for voice traffic. Do you think your network is up to the challenge, especially at the LAN/WAN boundary? (This is a particularly vulnerable area.) Also, does your network have the capacity to grow with your company?

Now look at your LAN environment.. Analyze your Ethernet switch statistics for evidence of packet errors or excessive collisions. Any equipment shortcomings will need to be corrected before moving forward. Common symptoms of a network problem can include jitter, packet loss and an overall delay in packet transmission.

### **Is it worth it?**

Yes. The rewards in deploying a Campus Network make it well worth the effort. Campus Networking puts every location within your organization under one unified voice platform. Calls routed through multiple offices across the country or across the world are no different than a call placed the next cubicle over. Your employees can dial 4 digits instead of 10 to reach a distant location, and you can avoid the long distance charges that would normally apply between far-flung offices. And all of the features and functionality enjoyed by your corporate headquarters can be accessed at any remote office location with no extra steps involved. Just make sure you and your vendor have a clear understanding of what a Campus Network should be.