Unified Communications

Discover Convergence Opportunities

What’s New & What’s Next in Unified Communications

Cloud-based Provider PanTerra Goes 100-percent Browser Based

UC Gets a Bug in its Ear with Terminix Deployment
So, if more employees can manage more messages and more customers can reach those employees more quickly at more locations, we can grow our business, right? And using a single messaging platform and VoIP, we can do that all in one solution, right? But if we don’t, we won’t grow, right? Yes, yes... and probably not.

Market Studies Indicate UC is Ready for Takeoff

Unified communications has been called out for being ill-defined and having a difficult-to-decipher return on investment. But studies indicate that businesses have found value in UC in the recent past, despite the incredibly difficult financial environment, and that the unified communications space is poised for big growth going forward.

"Against the backdrop of significant enterprise spending reductions on all kinds of products, the unified communications market is holding up remarkably well," notes Matthias Machowinski, an analyst with Infonetics Research.

Infonetics estimates that shipments of communicator clients increased nearly 1,000 percent between the first half of 2008 and the first half of 2009, reaching 5.4 million, with revenue nearly tripling. It attributes that growth primarily to bundling of communicator clients with core telephony system sales. And while the company reports that worldwide revenue from unified messaging platforms and communicator software clients is expected to drop by 4 percent in 2009, it notes that’s a pretty good showing considering the decrease in overall enterprise telephony spending during the same period.

The company goes on to forecast that, as the economy recovers and communications spending again ramps up, UC has the potential to top $1 billion by 2013. Meanwhile, a new ABI Research report indicates the unified communications market will rise to nearly $4.2 billion in 2014, up from just $302 million in 2008. Wainhouse Research is even more bullish, expressing its expectation that the UC industry will hit $30 billion by 2014.

Infonetics notes that Avaya in the first half of last year captured the No. 1 position for communicator licenses, following what the research firm says was an aggressive One X upgrade promotion. The company’s latest report ranks Microsoft and Cisco as the most widely deployed UC suppliers, and AT&T and Cisco as the leading VoIP equipment and services providers.

However, Machowinski of Infonetics says that just what UC suppliers ultimately will be the winners and the losers in the UC space remains to be seen, noting that businesses seem to be open to considering relatively new suppliers for unified communications, including the likes of Google and Skype. The same study talks about how cost, complexity and network capabilities are the leading barriers of UC deployment, which is probably why the cloud-based unified communications providers have been able to get a foot in the door.

"...we are seeing significant interest and now some large deployments in the UC services market, and we expect managed/hosted UC services to grow tremendously," says Wainhouse Research analyst Brent Kelly.

By Paula Bernier
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Cloud-based UC Provider PanTerra Goes 100-percent Browser Based
PanTerra Networks Inc. at ITEXPO EAST last month in Miami grabbed headlines with a major new release of its WorldSmart solution. Unified Communications magazine recently spoke with Arthur Chang, CEO and president at the cloud-based unified communications provider, to learn about more about PanTerra and WorldSmart 4.0.

UC Gets a Bug in its Ear with Terminix Deployment
Terminix Service Inc. recently was forced to make a big decision about its communications system. Its legacy phone system, made up mostly of Toshiba key systems, was like a wood house after years of termite damage — “about to fall down,” says John Dorn, director of information services at the Columbia, S.C.-based business. So the independent franchise of Terminix International began what turned out to be an eight-month search for a new solution.
While the cost-saving benefits of VoIP are well documented, voice quality has emerged as one barrier to adoption, for businesses and consumers alike. Now, consumers have access to a device from Ooma that provides free U.S.-based telephone calls and advanced telephony features for superb voice quality.

Ooma’s appliance offers exceptional voice quality and the reliability of a traditional phone service, but at a fraction of the cost. You don’t need a headset. You simply connect the device to your high-speed Internet and your existing phone, and that’s it. You’re ready to start calling and experience Ooma’s great voice quality.

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- Get access to case studies detailing successful deployments of Ooma’s products.

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http://voice-quality.tmcnet.com/
A humble thank you to everyone who came out to ITEXPO last month in Miami. Thank you conferees, who braved a tough economic climate and came to the show. I also want to extend appreciation to the speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and attendees at the show. In addition, thanks to our many partners who contributed greatly to the success of the week of events.

Most people told me this was the best ITEXPO ever – in terms of both quality and quantity.

Here is the summary of attendance:

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<th>2010 Total Attendance</th>
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Demographics

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Many aisles at the show were busy for three entire days, making me wonder if the attendees who were there had more interest than ever and spent a record amount of time in the exhibit hall.

There was so much to see at this show, including new technologies and events such as 4G, M2M, cloud telephony, startup camp telephony, smart grid and many others.

What does the success of this event mean for the health of communications and technology? Well, as I have been saying all along, if you are a responsive company, and have great products and promotion, you can do very well in the market. There is tremendous demand to save money and increase productivity and if you are innovative, customers will buy from you – even in a tough market.

This should be a strong lesson that consistent investment in R&D, PR and marketing are essential to maintain, and even gain, share of market. Yes, there is pressure on the high end of the market in part from Asian manufacturers that wreak havoc on companies that do not operate a lean ship, but cheap competition is not new and innovation and branding are two ways to win the war against commoditization.

To see more about the news and other takeaways from the show, we welcome you to peruse the numerous stories and view the ITEXPO EAST videos, all available at www.tmcnet.com. And we look forward to seeing you all at our next big event – ITEXPO WEST 2010 – Oct. 4 through 6 at the Los Angeles Convention Center in sunny L.A.
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Whether you are a start up or an established company, a one-person business or an organization of 100 employees, a VoIP-hosted phone solution with a lower TCO, reduced complexity and more advanced communication features is the obvious and smart choice.

But, one size does NOT fit all! As such, TMCnet has joined together with one of the industry’s leading IP communications service providers, 8x8, Inc., originator of Packet8 Internet Phone Service, to educate the business and residential communities on the advantages and efficiencies of VoIP-hosted phone service.

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Snow Debuts 870 Touchscreen Desktop Phone
At ITEXPO EAST 2010 last month in Miami, snom technology AG debuted its latest advanced VoIP communications products and technologies for the SMB and enterprise markets. The company at the show did demos of the snom 870 touchscreen desktop phone and its PA1 public announcement system. snom also featured the snom OCS for unified communications and its IP conference phone: snom MeetingPoint.

RockBochs Launches Fax over IP Solution
A Buffalo, N.Y.-based provider of VoIP equipment and systems has announced the addition of a new fax over IP offering for its customer base of more than 75,000 businesses, service providers and resellers. RockBochs' FaxxBochs solution combines a low-cost fax over IP gateway with an affordable monthly service so businesses of any size can have reliable analog-to-analog faxing over an IP network. The FaxxBochs fax over IP gateway is available starting at $175 and a $30 monthly fee for the corresponding monthly service.

SEN Group to Resell Polycom
Siemens Enterprise Communications Group plans to offer Polycom's portfolio of visual communication solutions, including personal, room and immersive telepresence services, videoconferencing systems, and desktop video collaboration applications. Polycom RMX series conference bridges and HDX video endpoints easily integrate with SEN Group's OpenScape Unified Communications Server, a UC platform that uses industry standards such as SIP and the service-oriented architecture, according to the companies. The deal also calls for SEN Group to offer customers Polycom visual communication solutions supported by its OpenScale Services, a portfolio of professional and managed services and solutions.

Point-and-Click VoIP from 8x8 Calls on Facebook
8x8 Inc. has announced the release of 8x8 Connect, a point-and-click VoIP calling application for Facebook. This application enables Facebook users to add a “call me” button to their home pages to allow users to call them without revealing their actual phone numbers.

UC Consulting Expands at Verizon Business
Verizon Business is expanding its suite of UC&C Consulting Services to help enterprise customers more effectively integrate unified communications and collaboration with their business processes. As part of this initiative, expert consul-
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- Best practices for developing new business models and strategies
- Opportunities to generate revenue while reducing OPEX

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Alcatel-Lucent
tants from Verizon Business will collaborate with customers to define their objectives; assess their current infrastructure; look at where in an organization investment in these communications tools can make the biggest impact; create user profiles to pinpoint areas in which business processes can be improved; and help organizations overcome other hurdles to deployment and acceptance of these new communications tools.

http://verizonbusiness.com

http://tmcnet.com/22136.1
InGenius Software Goes GA with Its Connector
InGenius Connector, a new PC search-and-dial application that is designed to extend the value of Asterisk Switches and Polycom VVX 1500, SoundPoint and SoundStation IP phones through the integration of telephony call control with Microsoft and Google PC desktop tools, is now available from InGenius Software Inc. The InGenius Connector acts as a single access point for users to search for and dial contacts, and easily retrieve contact information, documents and e-mails based on incoming caller ID.

www.ingeniussoftware.com

http://tmcnet.com/22137.1
Whiteley’s xG Emphasizes Importance of Service Quality
With the rise in popularity of mobile VoIP, service providers must put in place certain requirements to ensure that the service is flawless. Chris Whiteley, director of business development for xG Technology and a panelist at last month’s ITEXPO EAST, says while voice doesn’t require much bandwidth, it requires error-free delivery. Concerning WiMAX and LTE, those services must implement scalable quality of service to support mobile VoIP sessions, he adds.

www.xgtechnology.com

http://tmcnet.com/22138.1
Lower Costs, More Bandwidth Driving Videoconferencing
While audio conferencing remains one of the top investment areas in the industry, videoconferencing is the next big thing, experts said during a panel at ITEXPO EAST 2010 last month in Miami. During the session called “The Future of Web Conferencing and Collaboration,” Greg Plum, director of channel development for The Conference Group, said lower costs, as well as the greater availability of bandwidth, is helping drive technology’s adoption.

www.conferencegroup.com

http://tmcnet.com/22139.1
FaxBack Reports Much Action on HTTPS Fax Platform
The new FaxBack HTTPS Fax Platform is being evaluated by more than 40 leading carriers, enterprises and SMB customers. The product is designed to enable fax machines and fax servers to achieve the same VoIP cost savings as voice calls while maintaining traditional TDM fax reliability over Internet-based VoIP, Wi-Fi, cellular or satellite connections.

www.faxback.com

http://tmcnet.com/22132.1
IBM, ShoreTel Products Combined in ScanSource UC Offer
ScanSource Communications, a value-added distributor of communications products and a sales unit of ScanSource Inc., has entered into an agreement with IBM and ShoreTel to distribute the Integrated Unified Communications Solution. ScanSource Communications plans to offer the total UC solution, named ShoreTel for IBM Lotus Foundations, to its reseller partners.

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In today’s economy, reducing costs while enhancing productivity is the key to success.

Recent business trends across the globe are indicating a "back-to-basics" approach for most companies: reducing costs and increasing productivity are being pushed to the forefront. These two objectives may directly compete with each other unless game-changing technology and innovative solutions are adopted. Businesses are increasingly turning to solutions like converged networks to simplify operations, minimize risk, increase bandwidth capabilities, and reduce costs.

The IP Communications world is being driven on many fronts and at the heart of this activity is a host of Communications Solutions to help streamline operations.

The Communications Solutions Community is designed to serve as a central resource for this fast-moving market. To stay on top of the Communications Solutions space, bookmark the Communications Solutions Community and make sure to return often for the latest news, trends, and industry-specific content.

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Your Best Bets for UC Features With an ROI in 2010

Those of you who read this column regularly will have noticed that it has a new byline. I’ve inherited the column from my long-time friend and colleague David Levy. The former Objectworld team in Ottawa is now happily part of ADTRAN. ADTRAN acquired Objectworld in September 2009 and recently launched a full suite of UC products, which included a rebranded Objectworld UC Server and some great new features including click-to-dial, and integration with NetVanta 7000 Series IP telephony solutions and ADTRAN IP phones. You will be hearing a lot more in the coming year about enhancements to ADTRAN’s UC product portfolio.

As for what lies ahead for UC in 2010, I expect this to be a watershed year for UC in the SMB. Everyone is cautiously optimistic about the communications market in general and the UC market in particular for the coming year. While pulse strings will loosen up a bit in 2010, we know that businesses, especially those that are small and medium-sized, will be looking for value — no matter what they are buying.

We certainly found that to be the case in 2009 when UC workforce productivity features with “soft” ROIs such as unified messaging, presence, and call redirection weren’t reasons for buying. Not surprisingly, businesses that simply could not defer new or replacement PBXs or UC systems last year were looking for alternatives that had a low TCO (or at least low initial cost) and came with inexpensive UC features, or UC features that could be easily added later.

More importantly, the primary impetus for an SMB to buy a UC solution was not TCO, but rather based on the solution having a short, identifiable ROI — usually within one to two quarters.

The ease with which a UC vendor could define an ROI in “hard” operating dollars, and the shorter the ROI, the more likely that vendor was to make a sale. UC features that allowed businesses to reduce operating costs, do more with less, or bring better customer service were high on the SMBs’ agenda last year and are likely, in my estimation, to remain so in 2010.

So, if you are planning to reap some of the benefits of UC this year, you will have to justify your purchase with a “hard” ROI. As David Levy wrote in this column previously, “The trick is to find the ROI opportunities with UC that are lurking, just waiting to be discovered in your business. You just have to know how to find them.”

I suggest that you start out by identifying one UC capability that has a justifiable ROI and use it to get started. In many cases I am sure that you will reveal several UC ROI opportunities once you start to interact with a solution vendor. If you choose a flexible UC solution that lets you add capabilities as you need them (or one that initially comes with them even though you are not using them), you will find that justifying additional UC ROI’s later will become easier as you gain experience. And, in many cases, desirable UC features that are more difficult to justify up front like unified messaging, personal assistants, call redirection, and presence come at a lower marginal cost and become easier to justify once you have a system deployed.

Based on those recommendations, here are my suggestions for the five best bets for UC features in 2010. These features are a good place to start and offer an easily identifiable ROI:

Fax If you have at least two fax machines you can reduce operating costs with a UC solution that includes desktop faxing and a fax server. An embedded fax server will let you save on supplies, telephone lines, and has productivity and security benefits. If you have a distributed operation with a data network in place you can save even more by centralizing fax.

Business process automation If you handle a lot of calls from your customers to access information that is already located in a line of business application database, you can reduce costs and provide 7x24 service by automating customer self service with communications-enabled business applications.

Notification If your business arranges appointments or service calls, you can automate reminder calls, freeing up service personnel for other tasks while reducing the number of no-shows.

Conferencing If you are using a service provider conferencing service and many of your conference participants are internal to your organization, you may be able to reduce costs by using the conferencing capabilities in your UC system. You may also be able to reduce your costs for outside participants using internal conferencing in conjunction with SIP trunking.

SIP trunking If your location has access to broadband services, you can reduce your costs to access the PSTN, long-distance and 800 number service charges by using a SIP trunking provider. SIP trunking also helps you leverage the benefits for all the previous four suggestions.

David Schenkel is senior technology analyst with ADTRAN (www.adtran.com).
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An Era of Federation Is Upon Us

by Jonathan Rosenberg

2010 is definitely going to be a year of change.

One change is a personal one. After five years at Cisco, I’ve moved on and have joined Skype as chief technology strategist, where I am responsible for directing the company’s overall architecture and technology strategy. This change allows me to focus on what is most important to me – driving innovation and change in the telecommunications industry.

Another big forthcoming change is in the area of federation. Over the last year, I’ve been writing in these pages about the challenges of inter-domain federation. Today, voice over IP is siloed. Though widely deployed within individual domains, it has seen little usage as the glue to connect users across different domains. There are many challenges to achieving open, Internet-based any-to-any federation over IP. The complexities of number routing, the issue of spam and concerns over security are the biggest ones. However, the benefits are substantial – wideband voice, video, and enhanced features – both now, and into the future.

To that end, I published a series of specifications to the Internet Engineering Task Force in November 2009 that describe a new federation technology called ViPR. ViPR solves the problem of inter-domain call routing, focused on enterprise-to-enterprise federation. It has several key properties.

- **It works with phone numbers.** Users in one enterprise can continue to call the numbers that they’ve been using to call users in another enterprise. There is no need to change numbers or dial by e-mail address.
- **It works with existing phones.** ViPR does not require users to change devices. They can use their existing phones, and calls are simply routed over the Internet instead of the telephone network.
- **It’s secure.** ViPR provides secure mapping from phone numbers to enterprises. It prevents an enterprise from stealing calls or hijacking phone numbers.
- **It features auto-learning.** The system is self-learning. The administrator in one enterprise does not need to configure a single piece of information about other enterprises. ViPR automatically finds and connects to other ViPR-enabled domains automatically.
- **It allows for worldwide reach.** ViPR works between enterprises anywhere in the world.
- **It offers unlimited scale.** ViPR works no matter how many enterprises use it, without imposing an undue burden on any one enterprise.
- **It has anti-spam capabilities.** ViPR has fully-automated anti-spam mechanisms built-in. Unwanted incoming calls are blocked without any interaction with end users or administrators.
- **It doesn’t rely on additional services.** ViPR does not require additional services from telecom providers; enterprises can use existing PSTN and Internet connectivity without change.

At first glance, these properties seem to be impossible to satisfy in totality. Indeed, they are impossible to satisfy simultaneously without a change in underlying assumptions. The underlying assumption in previous federation solutions was that, prior to deploying the solution, the PSTN would be used exclusively to connect enterprises. After the federation solution was deployed, IP networks would be used exclusively.

ViPR, however, uses an incremental approach. Once enabled, it gradually shifts traffic from the PSTN to the IP network, using the PSTN itself to help drive the transition. ViPR is a hybrid technology, combining the PSTN with SIP and peer-to-peer technologies.

Recent months have marked another important milestone in federation technologies – the launch of Skype for SIP. Skype for SIP enables federation between Skype (with more than 520 million registered users) and enterprise users, also using SIP. Enterprises can now obtain Skype IDs. Any Skype user can call those Skype IDs and be connected to users within the enterprise via a SIP-enabled PBX. This isn’t just about cost reduction – it’s also about lowering the barriers to communications. By making it easy for Skype users to connect to businesses right from their Skype clients, or from their Web browsers using the Skype toolbar, communications can happen more often.

Skype for SIP marks a really important first step in bridging together one very large community (the Skype user base) with another – IP-enabled enterprises. In the future, this connectivity will allow for services beyond basic voice – such as wideband speech, video, and collaboration. This, in turn, will fuel the network effect even further.

As we enter a new year and a new decade, I believe we are also entering a new era of unified communications – one in which rich communications experiences break out of their silos. 2010 will mark the beginning of widespread federation, enabling rich communications between users in different domains. Once we’ve achieved that, the industry will have conquered its final frontier.

Jonathan D. Rosenberg is chief technology strategist with Skype (www.skype.com).
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There have been many recent advances around unified communications – and networking in general, but the common thread that seems to run through all of them has to do with simplification. That includes both simplification of the user experience as well as simplification of management and application development.

From the user experience perspective, UC companies are delivering solutions that integrate a wide variety of communications capabilities so users can easily launch collaboration sessions within or between enterprises from either room-based systems or from their own desktop PCs or phones; feel as though they’re in the same room as their far-flung colleagues via telepresence and/or HD audio communications; trigger and manage communications from within existing applications and interfaces; leverage popular social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter in new ways to communicate with coworkers and other peers; and enjoy the same UC features whether they’re physically plugged in to the corporate network or are mobile or otherwise remote.

The industry and its customers are moving beyond a focus on plain vanilla IP telephony and instead looking at VoIP as part of a larger picture, which also includes unified communications and Web 2.0 social networking capabilities, says Bruce Morse, vice president of unified communications and collaboration at IBM Software Group. Along that track, he adds, we’re seeing more back-end consolidation and front-end consolidation with single user interface and Web 2.0 capabilities.

To address the needs of IT and financial folks at businesses and service providers, companies in the UC space also are working to make communications more manageable and cost efficient by introducing new tools, interoperability platforms and efforts, and hosted and cloud-based solutions.

Conf erencing & Collaboration
Several UC companies now offer conferencing and collaboration solutions that enable users to initiate audio or video sessions with one or multiple parties with a quick point-and-click operation. Many such solutions also include the ability to bring in new participants, applications and information sharing during the call itself.

While videoconferencing has traditionally been enabled by large, room-based systems, it’s now expanding to the desktop, which allows for more integration with users’ other applications.

For example, Avistar Communications Corp. recently introduced the Avistar C3 Unified - Microsoft OCS Edition and the Avistar C3 Integrator - Citrix Edition solutions, two software-based videoconferencing solutions.

“The Avistar C3 Unified - Microsoft OCS Edition solution picks up where Microsoft OCS leaves off,” says Avistar CTO Chris Lauwers. “Our solution extends Microsoft OCS and delivers a desktop visual communications experience that is vibrant, feature-rich and interoperable.”

It enables direct interoperability between desktop video solutions and SIP- and H.323- enabled room solutions. The solution also supports presence multiparty videoconferencing and HD video resolution, and leverages Microsoft OCS presence and desktop integration features. The Avistar C3 Integrator - Citrix Edition, meanwhile, is a desktop videoconferencing solution designed specifically to run on the Citrix ICA protocol. It can be accessed through the Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp solutions as well as via Wyse thin terminals.

Another company offering PC-based videoconferencing solutions that can tie in with H.323 and SIP systems already in place at some businesses is Elluminate.

“Companies need to engage people where they need to collaborate with the equipment they have in a way that’s effective,” says Gary Dietz, senior product manager for Elluminate, adding that 85 to 90 percent of traveling employees in any business vertical want to do collaboration and conferencing on their laptops.
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Video, which owned the spotlight in 2009, also is increasingly expanding to specialized desktop phones.

Polycom early last year introduced the VVX 1500, a SIP-based solution that integrates with the PBX and can be used as the main communications device on a user’s desktop. It supports HD audio calls as well as videoconferencing.

Cisco Systems Inc. also recently unveiled two new phones, which Laurent Philonenko, vice president and general manager of the unified communications business unit at the networking giant, says reinvents what it means to be a phone.

The videoconferencing phones Cisco introduced in November feature big VGA screens, HD cameras, wideband audio, USB ports, and Bluetooth and Wi-Fi capabilities. Because they offer a USB, users can plug peripherals such as speakers into the devices. Because they include Wi-Fi, they can easily be moved because they’re not physically plugged into the network. And because they include Bluetooth, users can easily move calls between these devices and cellular devices, Philonenko adds.

Even Alan Baratz, senior vice president and president of global communications solutions at Avaya, is talking about reinventing the desktop phone. He says that while CIOs would like to get rid of one of the three devices prevalent on most knowledge workers’ desks – that device being the wireline phone – users like their phones. So Avaya is making the phone a chameleon with broadband functionality, he says, promising Avaya would announce more details on this front by the end of the first half of 2010.

Videoconferencing also is showing new momentum in terms of room-based systems. One of the exciting new areas on this front is the release of telepresence systems from such suppliers as BrightCom, Cisco, Hewlett-Packard, LifeSize Communications Inc., Polycom and Tandberg, which Cisco was attempting to buy at press time.

Telepresence makes videoconference participants feel as though they’re actually in the same room as their remote counterparts, a sensation Grace Kim, senior marketing manager with Cisco’s collaboration software group, describes as ‘a more immersive experience’ than that offered by your standard room-based solution. With telepresence, Kim explains, the participants at the other end of the connection are life-size, and communications are face-to-face and allow for eye contact.

Wideband Audio
Room-based videoconferencing systems have long employed high-definition technology, but now HD is conquering the audio space as well.

All of Skype’s services today are based on the Skype wideband codec known as SILK, says Chris Moore, senior product manager for business at Skype. He adds that SILK is now going through IETF standardization.

Last year saw several wideband phones come onto the market and HD voice expanding into integrated services. And there’s more to come on the HD voice front in 2010.

Frost & Sullivan indicates the telepresence solutions and videoconferencing market is poised for strong growth, with the market expected to reach $4.7 billion by 2014. Of that total, the Asia-Pacific region is forecast to be a major market for telepresence and will account for more than one-third of the total market, or $1.7 billion in revenue, the report says.
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Polycom also has continued its HD audio effort by unveiling the SoundPoint IP 335 desktop phone and the CX300 desktop phone. Tim Yankey, director of product marketing of voice communications solutions at Polycom, says now the company offers HD voice in a variety of products ranging from the high end to the lower end.

Also on the HD voice front, Vivox, which provides voice services to online game and social Web application developers, is licensing the royalty-free Polycom HD Siren 14/G 722.1C voice codec.

What's New & What's Next in Unified Communications

Daniel Berninger, CEO of Pulver.com's Free World Dialup, which has launched a project called HD connect to move wideband voice forward, believes that by the end 2010 HD voice will be a feature of all UC solutions at Polycom, says now the company offers HD voice in a variety of products ranging from the high end to the lower end.

“Unified communications is about unifying your business process and really giving you better productivity of all of the communications services you have,” explains Mohammad Nezarati, president and CEO of esnatech. “So when a call comes in, and I know that it’s Paula calling, it would be useful to know that Paula has called three times this week, and these are the e-mails that Paula has sent me. So we have a search window that pops up automatically when we receive a new call that gives us a history of that call.

“We integrate with CRM systems in the back end,” he continues. “We integrate with various different mail servers to integrate not only your mail but also your calendar and your contacts. So if I’m sitting in my car I can just hit a button and say the person’s name, and it will connect me to that person right through my office PBX without me having to pay for that call on my cell phone. It’s really about unifying all of the different communications fields.”

And users need not be on the same application or matching endpoints, he adds.

“You could be on Google and I could be on Exchange and [someone else] could be on Lotus, and we could all be using our systems in a very similar way,” says Nezarati. “Basically, you stay within the application platform you’re most used to and you’re comfortable in. We’ll just enable that for you.”

Integration with Existing Apps

Whether an individual is communicating via voice, video, e-mail, IM, text, or whatever, UC platform and services providers want them to be able to focus on the message and the best way to convey it rather than concerning themselves with the technology side of the equation. So UC solutions providers this year continue their quest to emphasize – and deliver – new, more integrated unified communications solutions.

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Social Networking

Of course, a wildly growing area of communications is social networking. As a result, UC companies have been hard at work figuring out how to bring social networking into the unified communications fold.

Among the companies championing this cause are Avaya and Siemens Enterprise Communications Group.
But OpenScape’s hooks into Twitter are just the tip of the iceberg, says Adrian Brooks, vice president of large enterprise and application strategy at Siemens. Social networking capabilities related to other sites could easily be linked with OpenScape, which is based on open standards including SIP, SOAP and XML. In fact, he says, it took just two weeks to do the Twitter integration.

Mobility & Presence

In addition to social networking, two other hot UC trends are mobility and presence.

According to David Puglia, chief technology officer of the enterprise business at Alcatel-Lucent, 70 percent of enterprise users are mobile, meaning they work remotely.

The rise of IP-enabled devices like smartphones means that rather than investing $1,500 per year, per user to manage Microsoft-based PCs, companies now can outfit their employees with smartphones, or netbooks, and realize tremendous savings because they don’t have the overhead of license agreements, he says, and they can access their applications and services from the carrier cloud.

“Mobility is going to be big,” he says. “It is big, and it’s going to be huge.”

Alcatel-Lucent also is working to tie contextual information into mobility, he says. The company this year expects to offer an upgrade to its current solution that can extract location and social information and contextual data so, for example, if a corporation wanted to identify and connect everyone working on a particular initiative, it could do so in an automated way via UC.

The Cloud

Puglia touches on yet another big trend in UC, which is the expansion of unified communications services into the carrier network cloud. Moving applications and services from the customer premises into the carrier cloud can enable companies to save both in terms of capital and operational expenditures, proponents of the model argue.

Among the companies offering such services are Alteva, Broadcore, Cbeyond, PosTrack and Whaleback Systems. Big names like Amazon and Google also have been active in offering a variety of communications services from the cloud, and it sounds like there’s plenty more to come. Google currently offers cloud-based e-mail, calendaring, document management and other features. And as of press time in mid-January the company was in beta with Google Voice and Google Wave.

Lars Rasmussen, one of the Google Wave team leads and a software engineering manager at the search and online advertising giant, explains that a Wave is a shared object.

"Instead of users participating in a Wave – and you can think of a Wave as being half way between a document and a conversation – a Wave is a tree structure of messages,” he tells UC magazine. “Each participant can add and remove messages; and they can edit existing messages. That’s really all there is to it. It sounds very, very simple, but it turns out that there is a very broad range of utility in these Waves.

“We have this ridiculously long demo that we did at our developers’ conference back in May where we go through and show how this Wave object can be used to have conversations like you would in e-mail, or on a bulletin board,” he says. “And you can have conversations like you would on an instant messaging system. But because you can edit messages – even each other’s messages – you can use it to collaborate on content by editing it, even at the same time.

“You can use it to put together photo albums. We have the extensibility mechanisms so that third parties can add types of content to it, from games to drawing surfaces,” he says. “One of our favorite
What’s New & What’s Next in Unified Communications

demos came from SAP to build a business processing modeling tool on top of it.”

Interoperability and Transcoding

The issues of interoperability, management, security and control are not particularly sexy, but we’re started to hear more about them as they apply to UC as well.

For example, given the wide range of codecs in use and the cornucopia of endpoints and user applications now available, there’s a need for normalization so end users don’t need to concern themselves with such issues, says Matthew Krueger, vice president of marketing and business development at Network Equipment Technologies.

“The codec should be the least of anyone’s concern,” says Krueger, adding that NET is focused on delivering solutions that allow everything to work together in the network so customers can continue buying best-of-breed products.

Acme Packet, Cisco and Genband are among the other companies focused on interoperability and transcoding for UC.

Cisco’s Philonenko says one barrier for ubiquitous unified communications is that when users collaborate with those outside their organizations they lose some of their capabilities. To address that, Cisco late in 2009 introduced a gateway, called the Cisco Intercompany Media Engine, which sits at the edge of enterprise networks to establish peer-to-peer relationships with similar gateways at other enterprises.

Additionally, Adobe now offers a new feature called Universal Voice that allows the Connect meeting to dial a 1-800 number to bring conferencing service providers into the mix. Adobe added media gateway functionality to its server, which acts as a bridge for transport protocols, using SIP and RTP to make the outbound communication with the conferencing service provider. That service provider then returns something like G.711 audio, and the Adobe server converts that to Flash audio, and broadcasts it within the meeting room.

“‘We recognize there are hundreds of audioconferencing service providers, so there’s no way we could have that integration and relationship with all of them,’ says Ryce. ‘And yet for many customers, they are more wedded to their audioconferencing than they are to any particular Web conferencing. So for those customers we have a new thing that’s called Universal Voice.”

Management

Being able to manage multiple PBXs and UC applications from a single system also can enable businesses to lower significantly their communications costs, says Steve Hardy, director of global communications manager, which provides SIP session management at Cisco Unified Communications Manager, which provides SIP session management at the call control level so PBXs from different suppliers can work together, share the same features, operate under a single management umbrella and enjoy the benefits of SIP trunking.

Meanwhile, Adobe has expanded the PBX integration capabilities of its Acrobat Connect Pro Web conferencing solution.

Peter Ryce, technical evangelist for Acrobat Connect Pro, says the Web conferencing solution has had telephony integration with solutions from such companies as Avaya, Cisco and Premiere Global Services, but that Adobe has expanded on that by also doing “tight integration” with InterCall. This integration outfits meeting participants with such capabilities as the ability to dial out to individuals, see who’s talking, mute people and put them on hold – all through a visual user interface using XML Web services on the back end talking to InterCall (or other telephony integration partner) servers, Ryce explains.

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“For large enterprises there’s a lot of savings potential,” he says, adding Avaya’s Aura platform also can enable a company to use a single feature server to support multiple locations.

To ensure customers get the experience they expect with UC, network operators also need to know what’s going on in their networks both at a high level and in more detail, says Jay Botelho, director of product management at SonicWALL Inc., agrees. The company recently unveiled a VoIP firewall that employs deep packet inspection to enable special treatment for certain applications, such as giving priority to voice, without adding latency.

Joe Frost, vice president of marketing of Psytechnics, says new tools for customer service representatives also can help ensure a high-level customer experience. For example, the company’s new Service Desk Manager runs nightly reports so service desk personnel during non-peak times can review call quality (and flags for issues that might need attention) records so they can escalate potential problems to be addressed before customers file complaints.

Patrick Sweeney, vice president of product management at SonicWALL Inc., agrees. The company recently unveiled a VoIP firewall that employs deep packet inspection to enable special treatment for certain applications, such as giving priority to voice, without adding latency.

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Cloud-based UC Provider PanTerra Goes 100-percent Browser Based

PanTerra Networks Inc. at ITEXPO EAST last month in Miami grabbed headlines with a major new release of its WorldSmart solution. Unified Communications magazine recently spoke with Arthur Chang, CEO and president at the cloud-based unified communications provider, to learn about more about PanTerra and WorldSmart 4.0.

Several SaaS-based UC providers have popped up in the past couple of years. What’s special about PanTerra?
Chang: PanTerra is not only the service provider, we’re the technology provider. Many of these service providers that have cropped up today don’t own technology; they’re just reselling others’ technology. They might be reselling Microsoft OCS. They might be reselling Cisco UC 500 call manager or WebEx. We have developed the technology, through the use of our own proprietary technology, and the use of open source standards, and through some judicious use of third-party software as well. We combine this all together to deliver this very tightly coupled unified communications platform.

Why do businesses need UC?
Chang: If you are able to unify your communications you can save in costs, capital expense, as well as ongoing communications monthly expense. You can increase productivity. And a lot of people talk about not just increasing productivity but increasing information access quickly – like the ability to quickly identify the sales expert in your company and instantly get access to [that person] instead of going through the traditional slow means of getting access to [that individual].

Why should businesses go with PanTerra’s UC solution?
Chang: Today UC is really delivered by essentially cobbled together a bunch of single-solution communications services. I might use WebEx for my collaboration. I might use maybe Covad or AT&T for my voice. And I’m using somebody else, maybe Five9, for my call center service. And that really has tremendous limitations. There are cost limitations. There are deployment limitations, administration limitations. If you can imagine a company that had to, for example, deploy 300 e-mail log-ins and 300 WebEx log-ins and 300 Five9’s call center queue agent log-ins and manage all those, [that company would] be managing over a thousand different logins. So those are kind of limitations you see in today’s kind of solutions.
What WorldSmart does is really offers a complete, cloud-based unified communications solution, whether it be collaboration services such as Web meeting and desktop share, or...
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- Case studies
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Participants in this community will be better prepared to make the proper decisions when it comes to selecting enterprise communications solutions based on Asterisk.

http://asterisk.tmcnet.com

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Chang: We really try to simplify the complexity of deploying communications in multi-location environments and lower the total cost of ownership, which is not only the capital expense of trying to run complex communications in organizations, but it’s also the ongoing expense, the monthly expense. We reduce your communications bills. We consolidate communications bills. And we allow you, the company, to manage these through standard browser portals.

The other key aspect to our product line is our future-proof communications guarantee. [That is], essentially, no matter how large your organization gets, no matter how many locations get added or employees get added, we guarantee infinite scaling. We guarantee that all updates and new features for that particular level of service are delivered automatically with no cost whatsoever. And you get support for life. One of the key things about our support is we provide 24x7, 365 days a year, instant support. At the click of the mouse you can get access to a support person, and they will respond within 30 seconds. No longer does a business have to get into a call queue and be put on hold for hours on end. It simplifies our life, because we can handle multiple instant messaging support issues. A lot of times people say ‘I lost my password. Or, can you reset my password?’ So a single support person can handle 15 support situations in parallel. So it lowers our costs, improves customer satisfaction significantly, and I think it’s proof again how unified communications really can permeate and improve productivity within businesses, including our own.

What do you have that enables this ‘infinite scaling’?
Chang: We really built the platform from the ground up to be a multiservice SaaS platform. We didn’t start, for example, with a softswitch. A softswitch is just one of our services. And this multiservice SaaS platform can truly scale. We’re agnostic to bandwidth. We’re agnostic to carriers. All of our services run on homogenous Linux blade servers, including all the back-end services – all the billing, the provisioning, everything is on identical blade servers, which allows us to scale much more effectively than older generation, hardware-specific telecom platforms.

So you feel that gives you the needed edge over telcos, which also typically have deep pockets and large embedded bases of customers?
Chang: These older generation companies were really infrastructure-burdened. They built the infrastructure, they owned the infrastructure, which at first started out being an advantage because they had the only infrastructure. And if you wanted to get voice communications, the only way you got it was through AT&T’s PSTN lines. The problem now is that infrastructure has become a burden because now there are many alternatives, there are many paths, to transporting communications.

Does this talking point mean you view AT&T and the other telcos as your key competitors?
Chang: Not so much for the infrastructure part. But AT&T, like many of these infrastructure play-
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http://sip-trunking.tmcnet.com

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- Interoperability
ers, they're trying to find value-added services to offer their customers because they know that's where the market's going. That's where the future is.

While AT&T has tried some of these single-solution services, like a BroadSoft platform for example, we view AT&T as a potential partner as they try to get into the unified communications solutions. We think we'll deliver much more value for them. But they still have those infrastructure burdens that they'll have to deal with.

In addition, a lot of these telecom companies were really on-premises hardware oriented. It was like, deliver a piece of hardware called a PBX or a piece of hardware called a call center. So that was also kind of going-away technology as people move to cloud-based architectures.

The bottom line is even the philosophy of telecom companies of the past is really different from PanTerra's. Prior telecom companies really were all about connecting A to B and really just getting out of the way and letting the bits move from A to B.

What we're really all about is intelligently processing, storing and searching communications bits. We allow you to store all your communications up in the cloud and process them, retrieve them, search them, act on them, and that's really value. That's the high-value difference between PanTerra and the older generation telecom companies.

What is PanTerra's go-to-market strategy?

Chang: We have a small number of direct sales people; the total company number is under 100. We'll always have a direct sales force because it keeps us close to customers, No. 1. It also allows us direct access to beta testers for new generation features.

We think that direct sales will always be a piece, a portion and a percentage of our total revenue. It probably will be a slightly higher percentage in the short run and slowly decline over time as the network of value-added resellers increases and productivity increases.

We have always believed the indirect channel is the volume deliverer of this stuff.

What's new with this release of your services, which you sell under the name WorldSmart?

Chang: WorldSmart 4.0 attaches now to our 100 percent cloud-based deployed back end. It now provides a 100 percent browser-based user UC client front end. So now you can get access to all your communications in the cloud with just a broadband connection and a browser.

You don't need to download any software on your client. That means administrators at companies don't have to manage any downloaded piece of software, or deal with security issues of a downloaded piece of software, or deployment issues of a downloaded piece of software. That means you can now get your communications identically on Windows machines, Macs, Linux machines, smartphones, Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Chrome.

All you need is the broadband connection and a browser. And that's powerful. And we're the first, we believe, in the market to do this.
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Small Business VoIP Online Community

Small business VoIP adoption is growing, largely because of the cost benefits, but the fact is that hosted VoIP services for small business, like Packet8’s Virtual Office, provide much more than cost savings. The greater versatility of hosted VoIP system allows businesses to customize their telecommunications packages to meet their unique needs, but without requiring large up-front expenditures for equipment, installation, maintenance, or IT staff. For the latest news and information on VoIP services specifically designed for the small business market, visit the Small Business VoIP community on TMCnet, sponsored by 8x8. Packet8 Virtual Office is an affordable, robust and easy-to-manage phone solution with all the premium PBX features and functionality of a traditional telecom system.

http://small-business-voip.tmcnet.com
Terminix Service Inc. recently was forced to make a big decision about its communications system. Its legacy phone system, made up mostly of Toshiba key systems, was like a wood house after years of termite damage—“about to fall down,” says John Dorn, director of information services at the Columbia, S.C.-based business. So the independent franchise of Terminix International began what turned out to be an 8-month search for a new solution.

Today, the company is happy to report that it has a new, IP-based unified communications system that offers desktop call management and that enables its IT staff of two to manage remotely the system. That includes the solution at the headquarters as well as related gear at eight of its 53 branch locations, which dot South Carolina, western North Carolina, and the Augusta, Ga., area.

“Instead of me having to get into a truck and drive three or four hours to the next branch office” to add a new phone to the system, for example, says Tommy Sellers, manager of corporate communications, he now can add or otherwise control phones remotely through an online portal.

Greg Braswell, area manager for the Mid-Atlantic at ShoreTel, says the management interface is called the ShoreWare Director and allows the distributed enterprise to be managed centrally.

Kevin Gavin, ShoreTel’s vice president of marketing, adds that the ability to have a desktop client that auto starts at boot up is also a nice management feature of the ShoreTel system, for which customers pay a single license fee for the PBX, the administrative interface, the desktop devices and the UC backend.

Terminix Service acquired the solution through reseller Prime Line IPS, which was a new relationship for the customer. The simplicity of the system offered up by Prime Line IPS “knocked everything else out of the water,” says Dorn.

That system includes a ShoreTel phone system at the Terminix Service headquarters office in Columbia, S.C., as well as at eight of its branch offices, as well as a Brocade/Foundry switch at the headquarters. ADTRAN power over Ethernet switches sit at the branches, Dorn adds.

The communications remodel, which Dorn estimates cost about $100,000 all told, also involved rewiring on the part of Terminix Service. The new IP telephone system couldn’t run over its existing hodge-podge of wiring, which included CAT 3. Since it needed to get to at least CAT 5 to make things work, it went ahead and rewired the whole campus using CAT 6, which Dorn and Sellers say now makes the network easier to troubleshoot.

In the wide area, traffic runs over the WAN, as Terminix Service has an MPLS network running the equivalent of a T1—about 1.5mbps synchronous. Smaller locations are brought into the network via DSL from their respective local providers. Dorn says each of branches also have POTS connections to support fax and ensure E911 access and other survivability in the event of a network outage.

Braswell of ShoreTel says the company was paying about $30 per trunk with the old system, but with the new setup was able to eliminate some of those lines in each of the offices with a unified dial plan that allows intra-company calls to go through an integrated network.

Beyond the centralized management, Terminix Service also got a wide variety of new calling features with the new system. That includes a call manager on the PC that displays visual voicemail on users’ computers. This interface shows users who called, when they called and what’s marked urgent. The solution also supports call routing, with an office anywhere feature that enables telecommuting from mobile devices or a home office, and a presence component for intelligent routing. A ShoreTel click-to-call feature, meanwhile, enables users to dial calls through a computer-based Outlook application.

That’s a big improvement to the former Terminix Service set up, in which the communications systems for each office were in separate silos, requiring 10-digit dialing between branch offices, says Braswell.

“It’s the difference between a Volkswagen and a Ferrari,” adds Gavin. UC
http://callcenterinfo.tmcnet.com/
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The result is growing adoption of unified communications solutions – the term used to describe communications platforms that integrate these different communications mechanism in use today, including the PSTN, VoIP, e-mail, fax, IM, voice and videoconferencing, and more.

Among the most appealing benefits of UC – in addition to cost savings – is the ability to leverage presence information across different communications standards to enable individuals to know instantly how to most effectively reach other users. In fact, many solutions allow users to define rules for different caller IDs as to when and how they can be reached by different individuals. And Asterisk developers are working on solutions that will integrate UC preferences with calendar information, so such detail can be automatically determined by the one application that knows best what your availability is.

Ultimately, while there are likely as many definitions of unified communications as there are vendors in the space, the underlying theme is integration of different communications platforms to create a more effective, easily managed communications system. Those benefits, along with the inherent cost savings, have created an industry that will likely come close to reaching $100 billion dollars in revenue over the next five years.

In recognition of the growth and innovation in the UC market, TMC is recognizing the vendors that are taking a leadership role in the industry and bringing innovative solutions to market that will help users leverage UC capabilities to grow their own businesses through more effective communication.

The vendors recognized by the Unified Communications Excellence Awards have raised the bar in the UC market and are developing the products and services that will drive the future of UC as a mechanism for fulfilling corporate strategies and driving business growth through advanced communications technology.

UC Excellence Awards

TMC Congratulates Winners of the Unified Communications Excellence Awards

By Erik Linask

As an increasing number of businesses enjoy the cost savings associated with VoIP, and as they learn to leverage VoIP and other IP-based communication technology to create more efficient and collaborative business environments, they are also demanding more from their service providers and equipment vendors. Likewise, enhancements to network technologies and end user devices are driving the development of new, innovative services that are delivered across wireline and wireless networks.

The vendors recognized by the Unified Communications Excellence Awards have raised the bar in the UC market and are developing the products and services that will drive the future of UC as a mechanism for fulfilling corporate strategies and driving business growth through advanced communications technology. UC
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