Enterprise VoIP from the vendor perspective

By Hunter Newby

Over the course of this article series there have been several different examples of VoIP uses, benefits, implementations and perspectives. Most recently this series has explored the industry analyst perspective as it relates to data metrics and how they are used and reported in order to identify success or failure and to forecast the best possible course in the future. As we have seen, sometimes the data does not give us a full, complete picture.

It's probably wise to analyze actual enterprise VoIP implementations from the equipment vendor perspective as well. Now that VoIP is mature and has been adopted by numerous businesses globally, significant and valuable lessons can be learned from real-life experiences.

The key challenges with any VoIP equipment vendor analysis are usually the same:

- Replacing legacy phone systems
- Maximizing budgets
- Simplifying administration
- Simplifying and enhancing the user features

Keep in mind that realizing cost savings from VoIP service – both carrier and intra/inter-office – does not require VoIP handsets and/or IP-PBXs. The addition of those network elements can create added efficiencies, but they also introduce added expense. However, VoIP handsets and IP-PBXs enhance the overall benefits of VoIP and often times create enough savings from VoIP call trunking to cover the cost of the entire deployment.

The overall benefits of a full VoIP implementation typically include:

- Thousands of dollars in savings when adding new locations
- Reduction and/or elimination of toll charges
- Remote management and ease of use/maintenance
- Unified calling platform (contacts built in to the phone system)

VoIP peering certainly contains the benefit of a common standard for VoIP calls, but it can be assumed that on an internal VoIP network the user is going to deploy one system moving forward and that the system will speak the same language (probably SIP) and the same CODEC (probably G.711). The VoIP system can help an enterprise be better prepared to interface with other VoIP networks if it supports multiple protocols and CODECs, but the real savings comes from putting calls on-net between branch offices and utilizing least-cost routing for the remaining outbound calls that terminate off-net.

These are important considerations that industry vendors are dealing with on a daily basis. After conducting a lot of research, I found that one vendor in particular, ShoreTel, stands out as a very professional organization with a great deal of well-documented enterprise VoIP case studies. Its case study of American Community Bank got my attention because it is very educational for sellers and buyers.

Dan Ellis, CFO of American Community Bank, said he selected ShoreTel because, "We wanted a system that was easy to manage, would reduce our long distance charges between branches and would provide simplified management." This is very important to note because he essentially said that he wants to peer his voice traffic. He is able to do this with VoIP through the use of the ShoreTel equipment and he also achieved the simplification of admin and user management.

The other key takeaway was that this directive was from a CFO. If the message about enterprise VoIP peering can be communicated clearly to the CFOs of the world, everyone will have an easier time selling.

The next step is to expand on this already understood concept of intra-company VoIP peering and explain the potential and added benefits of inter-company VoIP peering. Once the CFOs grasp the capability of utilizing their existing VoIP investment for inter-company VoIP, their savings will compound.

These are generic, almost universal benefits to many enterprise organizations. And details are found in numerous vendor case studies. Anyone involved in the sale and installation of VoIP products and solutions would do well to read as many vendor case studies as they can get their hands on. If you need assistance, I'm happy to point you in the right direction. Just send me an email or give me a call.

*Hunter Newby is chief strategy officer of tel*ˣ. *If you know of an enterprise VoIP peering implementation and would like to suggest it for a future article, please email him at hnewby@telx.com.* **FAT**

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