

VoIP delivers many upsell applications and enhanced services.



Voice of reason

IP connectivity is leading the way in enterprise VoIP. **Khris Kendrick of Grandstream Networks** breaks down the latest trends and explains the importance of the symbiotic relationship required between manufacturers, service providers and installers to catapult VoIP adoption even further.

Worldwide economics may be uneasy, but businesses are as intrigued as ever with voice over IP (VoIP) solutions that offer multimedia applications while reducing costs and increasing productivity. The opportunity to make money remains and the future is bright. Businesses large and small will rebuild and continue to do so after the downturn. Now is the time for installers to prepare for market opportunities.

Success = symbiotic relationship

With features and applications being continually introduced to further the value of VoIP networks, optimum success will require a symbiotic relationship between the VoIP hardware manufacturer, network provider and installer. The result of this relationship will help drive future trends, yield more wide scale adoption of VoIP and deliver economies of scale.

With a growing list of business VoIP features available, installers need to stay mindful of what it will take for their business to stay on top and make money. To expand revenues, installers 'must have' VoIP solutions that are:

- Easy to set up/scalable – Similar to how simple it has become to install a home router, VoIP solutions needs to be the same (web driven/smart software). Quick installations mean fewer truck rolls and multiple daily account installations, bringing opportunity for optimum revenue and margin expansion.



VoIP implementation is a huge boost to any business.

and simultaneous ring to drive productivity. Adoption of SIP open standards is paramount now and in the future. There are also solutions that are dual stack devices that support SIP as well as proprietary protocols which standards boards have yet to ratify. Skype for SIP is one of those cases where an open standard can coexist in harmony with a proprietary protocol that allows businesses access to millions of customers and is easy to use.

It's important for installers to use the same service provider they are recommending to business customers. This 'do as I do' approach will provide valuable insight into quality of service (QoS) and service level agreements (SLAs) customers are experiencing. Installers, VARs and VADs need to understand if the service provider is offering the right SLA back to the business end user. In the event that a business customer is having problems with their current VoIP provider, the installer can then recommend a known network provider that is well managed with certainty of 24/7 call completion. This is also a revenue source for the installer because network providers provide bounties for every new customer and possibly recurring revenue streams.

- Choice of vendor through standards based gear – This is evident with the majority of VoIP gear supporting open standards like Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), the application layer protocol that has emerged as the standard for controlling multimedia communication sessions like voice and video over IP. Open standards provide the flexibility to interoperate with multiple vendor equipment allowing businesses to extend their network offering, shorten product lifecycle, time to market and vendor selection. Many market solutions boast the ability to support open standards as well as proprietary features which also provide business value, uniqueness and security.
- Automated with predictive provisioning – Simplified installations involve automation. Beware of solutions from network providers that involve manual processes which could mean the provider has not invested in their network or has not certified the right CPE manufacturer to ease the pain of the install and rollout.
- GUI continuity – Easy web driven GUIs distill complexities giving the installer a 1-2-3 install procedure. For example, when logging into a Skype device, it's the same interface no matter the device. This is known as device continuity.

Also, be aware of closed systems that can't be easily upsold with new open gear coming to market. This path will severely limit the long term value of an installer's services. Especially since VoIP delivers many upsell applications and enhanced services such as high definition (HD) video conferencing, HD voice, presence

New VoIP trends

Once the SLA is in place and everything is running like clockwork, there are newer avenues available to an installer that can help garner a deeper relationship with their customers. For example, Skype and Google provide great add-on services in the cloud for every VoIP experience. Although Google Voice is only available in the U.S., surely they are thinking about pan deployments and availability. Currently, Google has voice trials and pilot programs ongoing in Asia. What's holding them back? Regulations. That's why Skype and Google cannot be a primary source of voice termination so network providers shouldn't be afraid to embrace them (yet). There are no provisions for E911; therefore, voice as an application can't be mission critical on their networks. Skype's hopes for a successful IPO may help them drive their presence enabled voice into the

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Businesses are willing to pay a premium for HD services.

biography



Khris Kendrick brings more than 20 years' experience to his role as senior director of business development at Grandstream Networks, a worldwide manufacturer of IP voice/video telephony and video surveillance solutions for broadband networks. In this pivotal role, Khris sets the vision for CPE business strategy and developing partner relationships. Prior to joining Grandstream, he was senior business development manager for Motorola's Core Networks Division, and was responsible for setting business strategies for IMS, Fixed Mobile Convergence (FMC) and managing third party IMS ecosystem relationships.

enterprise world – where knowing where a contact is and their immediate availability to take a call is a huge competitive advantage over the competition waiting for a voicemail or snail mail reply.

Installers can extend the value of a business customers' SIP enabled IP PBX, by integrating Skype for SIP without the need for new hardware or software. Skype for SIP allows voice and video calls to be made directly from their desk phones with third party software and hardware from such vendors as Grandstream.

Right now desktop HD voice, HD conferencing and HD video are primary sources of excitement in the industry. Businesses are willing to pay a premium for these HD services. As the price of VoIP handsets and voice termination approach ground zero, higher margins will be available by deploying HD quality wide bandwidth voice and video. Be sure that the network can support it through the service provider's SLA plan.

Importance of partnering

Firstly, SLAs are the thickest link in the value chain. Without the assurances of voice fidelity and a finely tuned managed network, customers will shun the new service. They will want proof of 24/7 remote monitoring for voice and video, QoS, training, and fast turnaround for support issues. Installers should review network provider policies carefully. The same goes for CPE manufacturers. Licensing, RMA process, second local support, web based knowledge bases and ticketing that can be accessed 24/7 should all be reviewed and in place.

Secondly, businesses have a higher tolerance for robotic jitter and dropped calls on mobile phones. On landlines, there is low tolerance. A phenomenon like this can drive businesses back to legacy networks. PSTN incumbent service providers have these highly tuned SLA processes in place and would gladly take back their customer. This is where the symbioses come in: For sustainability, find a service provider with fast support channels and robust SLA and partner with a manufacturer with first and second level support.

Similar to the photographer who was asked, 'How do you take such wonderful photographs?' The photographer replied, 'lighting, lighting, lighting!' Case in point, end users will need 'bandwidth, bandwidth, bandwidth.' This will be costly to the business, but nonetheless a must have to achieve SLA expectations.

Security

Session and security aware devices are very important. Going forward, successful agents need to be able to recommend Session Border Controllers (SBC) to customers as a security option. There are vendors out there creating edge devices to ensure SLA policies at the edge of the enterprise. These edge, or border devices, ensure a high quality, end-to-end interactive communications across multiple IP networks. It's done, for example, by giving voice traffic priority over casual web browsing data. This is known as traffic shaping and routing policies, again ensuring SLAs. SBCs can block attacks from malicious Internet attacks, provide QoS accounting, least cost routing mechanisms and policy control over media. Together, these edge devices help create a comprehensive solution required to deliver a robust, quality, moneymaking, voice, video and multimedia communications across IP network borders.

Business benefits

VoIP implementation is a huge boost to any business, saving up to 70 per cent from the reduced need for equipment, lines, manpower and maintenance.

Benefits range from number portability, service mobility, ability to integrate and collaborate with other applications like Skype's global click to call button on a business' website, voicemail sent to email, call completion on multi-clients (mobile phone, PC and home phone) using features like Find Me Follow Me. With the implementation of video phones, high quality video calls can be easily adopted within businesses as a substitute for time consuming, costly business travel while visually connecting geographically dispersed workers and customers.

Implementing applications like VoIP and Skype for SIP allows companies to drastically reduce long distance costs by allowing customers and remote employees to make free inbound calls to the IP PBX from anywhere in the world. Inbound calls from customers requiring assistance from technical support, sales or customer service can all be handled by this method for free, as opposed to using a costly dedicated 800 service. With the world economic situation, businesses need to acquire customers and keep existing customers happy with superior customer service without having to outlay huge amounts of money for operating costs like phone calls.

Summary

In summary, there are three parties involved in getting enhanced voice solutions to the business customer or consumer. Solutions providers need to work in unison to benefit from VoIP's value proposition. If one partner is not pulling its weight, the installer can end up losing customers and missing valuable opportunities to acquire new ones. It's important for installers to get it right from the onset by selecting the right product and service providers to persuade customers to commit to new communication services and stay with them. From there, happy customers will propagate their success stories virally through their own social networks. ■