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The Advent Of Voip

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THE LANDSCAPE OF COMMUNICATION HAS changed dramatically in the past decade, and the telephone is no exception. No longer are people driving from place to place in search of the nearest payphone to keep in touch with the office, with a roll of quarters in one hand and a digital pager in the other. Automated attendants have replaced the receptionist as standard practice in most small offices; cell phones are replacing standard phone lines at an exponential rate; and now you can bundle your home phone with your television service.

To stay in touch with the world in the past, you had to be there to answer the phone, or look for the flashing light of recognition and press “play” on the answering machine to hear the voice of the person whose call you missed.

Now, we seek a constantly connected world. We read e-mail while drinking coffee; our children instant message their classmates in school, across the hall or in another country; and we feel completely vulnerable if we happen to leave the house without our cell phone. We can even talk to anyone in the world with minimal or no long distance charges through VoIP services from Skype, Boingo, Vonage and a myriad of other providers. Voice over IP, or VoIP as it’s commonly known, is the practice of using an Internet connection to send and receive voice data using Internet Protocol (IP) instead of the standard public-switched telephone network.

VOIP’S IMPACT ON BUSINESS

Business communication is undergoing the same metamorphosis. Current VoIP technology now allows the connection of offices across town or around the globe, enabling a remote worker to function as if he or she were directly connected to the corporate headquarters—even while at home or at a remote office. In addition, VoIP avoids standard long-distance charges because the only connection is through an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Because of this single connection, businesses are turning to VoIP more often as a way to lower corporate telephone costs. They can run a single network cable to a desk as opposed to a rat’s nest of voice and data cables. Companies can also integrate VoIP into their standard network infrastructure, as long as they develop a well-configured network to support it. This implementation process is referred to as “convergence,” with both voice and data sharing the same pipe to the end user.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

VoIP technology provides several options for workers to connect to the office. They can use IP phones that resemble standard office phones or software phones that mimic the telephony features found on a PC or PDA. They can also integrate their office PBX to the cellular phone network, bridging the gap between “in the office” and “out to lunch” with the same device.

New technology is developing at exponential rates-- bringing the world closer together and creating a new paradigm where an individual is simply a user name, regardless of the communication medium. Today, you can be reached via instant message, e-mail, cell phone, voice mail, collaboration and Web cam using a single user name. It’s only a matter of time before Rolodexes the world over will be streamlined to a few entries, such as an IP address or a single e-mail address, that allow anyone in the far corners of the globe to be reached through a simple point and click. **N**

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