

IP Communications

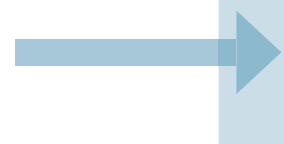
A Wealth of Innovations Begins to Deliver New Value to Business



While the full legacy of the Internet and World Wide Web has yet to be written, the swiftness with which these innovations are drawing the world closer continues to astound. The newly discovered desire to control all the permutations and combinations of the ways people communicate, through time and space, is creating infinite challenges. In response, communications innovators are mining the vast potential of the Internet and coming up with ever-richer solutions.

Indeed, the rapid spread of IP, or Internet Protocol, across all wired and wireless networks, including the public Internet, service provider networks, and corporate LANs—and the IP-enabling of communications and computing equipment designed to connect to these networks—has created the foundation for a whole new set of powerful communications capabilities. Says Jeff Pulver, CEO of Melville (NY)-based pulver.com and a leading proponent of IP communications technology, the advent of IP-based communications “opens up voice as an application on the network, allowing it to converge with other media, such as video, instant messaging, and other IP-based applications, such as presence, that together create entirely new classes of service and functionality.”

This generation of IP-based technology can achieve quantum leaps in productivity for businesses. The following pages describe products and services that deliver new communications power: fully integrated telephony and computing resources at the desktop; communications seamlessly networked at all levels of an enterprise; presence-based, workgroup collaboration that incorporates instant messaging; and virtual contact-center operations.



IP Communications

Navigating the New Waters of IP

By now, all the major vendors of corporate phone systems have introduced IP-based communications systems — commonly referred to as IP-PBXs — that are designed to leverage the flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and rich new functionality enabled by IP networking, while at the same time retaining the features common to traditional systems.

One such company is Mitel, in Ottawa, Ont. Mitel stands at the forefront of design and innovation and has developed a number of intuitive, breakthrough devices and applications that are helping to enhance employee

productivity and redefine business communications. Mitel's new Navigator device is one such device, radically enhancing the potential of voice, video, and data convergence on the desktop.

The Mitel Navigator delivers a unique experience and can be personally tailored for specific horizontal and vertical market applications.

The Navigator is a sleek, silver device designed to fit neatly under a flat screen monitor. It's easy to use and can deliver powerful functionality and applications via a tightly knit interface with the PC. As a telephony endpoint, the Mitel Navigator supports the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) and Mitel's own proprietary MiNet protocol. Mitel Navigator can also be linked to Mitel Your Assistant, which is a highly intuitive suite of tools delivering presence, collaboration, video and instant messaging, and call and directory management. The Mitel Navigator can also be used with Microsoft's Live Communications server to enhance the telephony-enabled desktop experience.

To simplify task navigation, nine user-programmable keys can be used to access a variety of telephony functions and computer applications. Employing the Navigator keypad or a mouse, these buttons invoke telephony features or launch local PC applications or network-based business processes. Multiple appearances enable users to access up to 27 commands and tasks. The Mitel Navigator also supports PC speakers and headphones that can be used with an embedded full-duplex microphone and speakers for hands-free or conference calling. The Navigator can even be used to play music from the computer and interrupt the music when a phone call is initiated or received. Says Don Smith, CEO of Mitel: "Today's challenge is achieving convergence for the user, not just for the communications infrastructure."



Mitel's Navigator: sleek and powerful

Innovative new IP-based communications services known variously as IP Centrex and Hosted IP-PBX are now beginning to be offered by service providers. Their appeal is in enabling an enterprise to subscribe to next-generation communications services rather than requiring the purchase of corporate-based equipment, thus saving on significant capital expenditures and the ongoing costs of maintenance and operations.

All Together Now: Communicate!

AT&T recently announced aggressive plans to roll out a portfolio of network-based, IP communications services across the U.S. this year, called AT&T Dynamic Network Applications (DNA). AT&T Voice DNA, a component within this portfolio, delivers the functionality of network-based IP communications without the complexity associated with premises-based solutions. AT&T Voice DNA provides enhanced features such as mid-call move, personalized call handling, on-demand audio conferencing, integration with Microsoft Outlook, plus much more. The service comes with a choice of calling plans (any distance and local), a full suite of comprehensive online management tools, and support for a number of IP phones.

With AT&T Dynamic Network Applications, the complexity and cost of communications can be reduced through the centralized control of communications across an entire enterprise, including remote, branch, and headquarters sites. Says Michael Antieri, group executive of product management at AT&T, in Bedminster, N.J.: "Network-based, IP communication applications are essential for competing in today's business marketplace. They are the core DNA for how businesses will increase productivity and create new ecosystems of opportunity." What's more, remote workers can plug in at the office or at home and be immediately operational—their number travels with them.

For corporate telecommunications administrators, a user-friendly Web portal provides centralized control across the enterprise for managing moves, adds, changes, disconnect activity, and reports. For employees, AT&T Voice DNA provides a personal portal to help individuals manage both their e-mail and voice mail with a simple interface that is accessible from virtually any Internet connection in the world.



photo: Lisa Quiñones

AT&T's Michael Antieri says customers value the convergence of all types of communication applications.

IP Communications

Powerful Collaboration

Today's advanced collaborative computing solutions allow geographically dispersed users to interact and share applications and documents as if they were in the same conference room. Collaborative computing applications are supported by many of the IP-PBXs on the market today and offer an extremely rich and highly cost-effective communications experience.

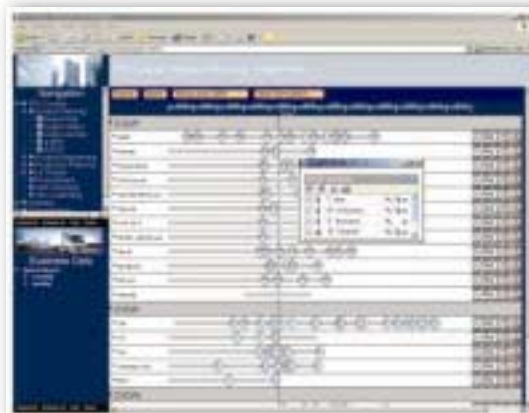
The HiPath OpenScape middleware solution, from Siemens Communications Inc., in Boca Raton, Fla., provides users with consolidated access to all enterprise communication resources, including voice features and services, e-mail, and instant messaging (IM). HiPath OpenScape also takes collaborative computing to the next level, offering intelligent, real-time access to people, calendars, and files through three new capabilities: presence-based communication, multi-resource collaboration, and an architecture based on open industry standards.

People have grown accustomed to using IM buddy lists and checking the availability or presence of contacts before starting a communication. HiPath OpenScape brings the buddy-list concept to the entire spectrum of enterprise communications, making it possible to extend presence awareness to the desk phone, the cell phone, e-mail, IM, and other media. Employees can click to identify which resources they want others to use at different times or circumstances, and the buddy list identifies the available choices.

Beyond an IP-PBX

IP Telephony continues to grow dramatically, but what are the compelling drivers for the future? New value-added applications centered on presence, collaboration, and *ad hoc* interactions among individuals, teams, and other stakeholders are extending the reach of enterprise communications and fundamentally changing the conventional landscape.

"Applications can now be extended to almost any device on a wired or wireless network, but at the same time, must be secure and managed and incorporate legacy environments seamlessly," says Don Smith (above), CEO of Mitel. "This will be achieved by applications and services gateways that extend the value of IP beyond the realm of a traditional IP-PBX."



Siemens' HiPath OpenScape brings the buddy-list concept to the entire spectrum of enterprise communications.

HiPath OpenScape also helps simplify the task of setting up multimedia conferencing, dramatically decreasing conference-service expense. HiPath OpenScape users can launch a robust collaboration session simply by selecting contacts from their buddy list and clicking on "audio conference" or "multimedia collaboration." The application proactively contacts all users by their preferred device and gives them access to documents via the collaboration portal, saving time and money.

Help is Where You Find It

With traditional premise-based technologies, every contact-center location typically requires its own dedicated systems, which must be custom-integrated at tremendous cost on a site-specific basis and provided with dedicated licenses, phone lines, and IT staff for each location.

New IP contact-center technology enables companies to centralize their technology resources and leverage them across a global network. This cuts costs and also increases productivity by enabling callers to be matched with the agent best qualified to deliver world-class service in the shortest time, wherever he or she is.

IP contact-center systems that enable companies to share centralized systems across locations while keeping the data of different groups separate are called "multi-tenant" technology solutions. One leading system, Telephony@Work's multi-tenant CallCenterAnywhere, "enables contact-center technology to be centralized while empowering local autonomy for individual sites or groups of sites without any of the traditional technology risks," says Eli Borodow, CEO of La Jolla (Calif.)-based Telephony@Work Inc. "It also enables all technology-driven contact-center business processes to be modified on demand at a local or global level, empowering companies to maximize productivity by optimizing technology-driven business processes in real time."

Telephony@Work's multi-tenant CallCenterAnywhere technology is deployed across the spectrum of large companies, government, and service-provider networks.

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IP Communications

It is also offered in Canada by Telus Communications Inc., in Vancouver. In running this multi-tenant solution, Telus is supporting diverse companies and government agencies, including the Health Benefits Organisation of British Columbia.

“We picked Telephony@Work because of the unique fitness-for-purpose of their hosted-services technology,” says Kevin Hayden, director of integrated contact centre solutions at Telus. “We needed a solution that would maximize our economies of scale in order to pass on the savings to our customers, and, at the same time, address all of the reliability, scalability, and network security issues related to rolling out a large-scale hosted service.”



Telephony@Work's Borodow: Centralizing contact-center technology while empowering local autonomy is key.

Brave New World

New IP-based phone systems, services, presence-based collaborative computing applications, and IP contact-center solutions are delivering real benefits to businesses. But it's also evident that we're just starting to discover what's possible with IP communications technology, as presence and other powerful capabilities begin to be integrated into the systems we use for our everyday communications. Observes industry guru Pulver: “For the first time, we have the opportunity to do things that were never before practical or possible.”

About the author

Marc Robins is an internationally known authority in the field of IP telephony and emerging new IP communications technologies, with more than 24 years experience in the communications industry as a reporter and analyst, conference producer and publisher, and marketing executive and consultant. From 1998 to 2003, Marc served as vice president of publications and trade shows and group editorial director at TMC, publisher of the trade magazine *Internet Telephony*, and producer of the *Internet Telephony Conference & EXPO* trade shows, for which he also served as chief architect and conference co-chairman. Today, Marc runs an IP communications industry marketing firm, and has recently launched a new publishing company focused on providing definitive sources of information for prospective buyers of IP communications technology. For more information, contact Marc at 718-548-7245 or e-mail robinsconsult@optonline.net.

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AT&T Corp.

<http://www.business.att.com/networkingexchange>

Mitel

<http://www.mitel.com>

pulver.com Inc.

<http://www.pulver.com>

Siemens Communications Inc.

<http://www.usa.siemens.com/communications>

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