

VoIP technology gaining momentum

2008: an inside look at the trends in technology **Interviewed by Chelan David**

Although no longer considered a new trend, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology is expected to gain even more widespread acceptance in 2008. VoIP involves sending voice information in digital form rather than using the analog protocol of traditional telephone networks. By converging voice and data systems into an IP telephony solution, businesses can streamline their operations, billings and maintenance. In addition to increased efficiencies, VoIP can also help ensure business continuity and provide numerous intangible benefits to businesses.

“VoIP has invaluable business continuity applications that provide an organization with redundant service coverage. If you were to have any kind of disruption, a secondary system would immediately compensate and continue communications as usual. Your customers would never be aware of any disruption nor would your daily operations be affected,” says Bill Capraro, President & CEO of CIMCO Communications. “VoIP fills that critical need to stay up and running, to service your customers and to remain connected to the world.”

Smart Business spoke with Capraro about technology trends for 2008, the benefits of VoIP and other advice he would like to share with technology decision-makers.

What are the trends for technology in 2008?

We see VoIP being implemented at warp speed given that it is well beyond the testing phase and is now valued as mainstream technology. Aside from its obvious benefit of unifying voice and data communication, VoIP provides built-in business continuity that protects against disruptive events like power outages or flooding. Consequently, I expect an upsurge in concentration on VoIP's business continuity applications and also an increase in outsourcing to support these applications.



Bill Capraro
President & CEO
CIMCO Communications

How do emerging trends such as VoIP translate to tangible benefits for an organization?

With VoIP, the technology to transport voice and data is less expensive than traditional circuit switching. Beyond the bottom-line savings, VoIP also provides productivity enhancements. One simple example is unifying communications, which connects voice mail to e-mail, providing one easy place to retrieve messages. This increased accessibility is a tremendous asset with very tangible benefits to both large and small businesses.

Why is investing in new technology solutions so important?

I can answer that question with one word: customers. New technology solutions allow businesses to serve their customers better. We've been in business for 23 years, and even 10 years ago, if you asked 100 businesses what their most important communication vehicle was, a majority would have said the phone. Today, if you asked the same question, more than 50 percent would say data connectivity.

There is a paradigm shift that is happening, and to keep customers happy and businesses profitable, investing in new technology is crucial.

Do these trends vary based on the size of the business?

Every business can take advantage of the benefits VoIP offers — size doesn't matter. VoIP technology can be implemented in several different ways to positively affect businesses of different sizes. And, it goes without saying that every company needs a business continuity plan. Having a plan in place to back up and store data, and knowing how to restore it, in the event of a business interruption is critical to daily operations of any business.

What advice would you offer IT managers for the upcoming year?

The four key words that strike me are audit, prepare, practice and outsource. With auditing, take stock of your current communications. Who are the users? How do you touch your customers? What are the most important arteries in your organization? Run through disruption or disaster scenarios and prepare your business for recovery from interruptions. Next, practice the recovery plans to ensure that you have the right solutions in place to provide continuity to your business operations.

Lastly, don't be afraid to outsource. Whether it's one small project or a major initiative, outsourcing to other professionals in the industry will allow you time to concentrate on core IT issues. By integrating VoIP into your business you can address each of these four core areas.

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