



What is the New Twisted Pair?

Transforming Communications in the Enterprise

From phones to Facebook, individuals continue to fundamentally change the way they stay in touch. While workers have been increasingly leveraging various new contact applications as unofficial enterprise communications tools, IT managers are now looking to exploit them to meet new business goals and change employer/employee work relationships.

Business by numbers

In a recent survey of 500 decision makers at 500 small to medium-sized businesses, it was found that 62% allow remote workers¹. 34% of employees at those firms do choose to work outside of an office environment, spending an average of 40% of their time working remotely. Indeed, well over half of the managers surveyed believe that working from home is more productive.

The trend in such working style is, of course, not new. The terms ‘telecommuting’ and ‘teleworking’ were introduced some forty years ago, and today it is estimated that over 40% of the entire US working population could do so; at least part of the time². Growing at a rate of 20% a year, the more recent trend towards ‘homesourcing’ has increased the need to support the communications requirements of a vast number of highly distributed users³. By accessing a home-based rural workforce with lower overheads, businesses can reduce opex and salary costs while increasing productivity. Homesourcing not only

benefits employees, creating an inherent sense of loyalty, but also the employer.

Finally, the slim-lining of the workforce is resulting in more time traveling and the desire for managers to attract key personnel wherever they may reside. Aided by a proliferation of smartphones that is nearing 95% for frequent mobile workers,⁴ these people, in return, have a renewed work ethic that is ‘always-on’. Reading emails at dinner (62%) on vacation (60%) or even in bed (50%), employees are compelled to check-in with the office regardless of where they are.⁵

Employee endorsed, but not IT approved

Whether on the other side of the world or the other side of the cubicle wall, individuals enjoy leveraging consumer tools to stay in contact with their colleagues. But only a quarter of employees in small to medium enterprise businesses do so with the explicit permission of their IT managers! Of those, practically none are integrated with other popular enterprise contact management systems, such as Outlook or Active Directory. The result is a pure buddy system and an assortment of two, three, even four distinct proprietary communicators utilized in a walled-garden fashion across a corporation. Consequently, IT managers are looking for alternatives to these economy-class solutions that support the managed, business-class, features they demand.

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Threatening business voice revenues

Instant messaging is no longer just for fun, it's a full-on contact sport in the enterprise. There are 47 billion instant messages sent per day, of which 15 billion are business related⁶. While it is now impossible to derive direct revenues from IM, these clients are severely impacting classic carrier revenue streams. Without physical ties, these applications enable not only high quality voice, superior to G.711 PCM, but also high definition video communication. Indeed, the 4% increase in IM usage in the enterprise predicted in 2011, pales in comparison to the 10% increase in VoIP and 13 % increase in desktop video,⁷ which these over-the-top networks are in a position to capture in a dramatic way. The more that customers use these applications, the less value that is ascribed to the service provider's brand.

Hosted services and the handset dilemma

Fueled by aging premise-based PBXs and their associated vendor-locked handsets, companies are flocking to a hosted telephony model to serve their business voice needs. While the hosted PBX model eliminates capital expenditure costs in favor of operational expenditures, the up-front price of new VoIP handsets is daunting. As these handsets do not satisfy an increasingly mobile workforce and might not provide the full suite of rich communications demanded by today's tech-savvy employees, even enterprises subscribing to hosted VoIP services are looking to augment them.

Deploying the new twisted pair

Metaswitch can dramatically reduce the up-front charges typically associated with renovating office telephony infrastructure, while also enhancing existing desktop phone offerings. Embracing the trend towards employee mobility, presence, instant messaging and high definition voice/video, the CommPortal Communicator product portfolio can turn mobile phones into office extensions, tightly intertwine PCs and cell phones and wrap business voice with unified HD communication. That's the new twisted pair: a communications solution that breaks the time-honored relationship between a quality, fixed-line, phone service and the humble copper wire by delivering voice as a pure application.

Cutting the cord

The enterprise has always depended on a quality, feature rich, telephony service and the telephone has always depended on the twisted pair. But with competing options readily available, customers are cutting the cord in favor of mobile telephony or voice over broadband. Service providers can counter this trend with (soft) phone twinning – a feature rich telephony experience that completely replicates the desk phone on more versatile PCs or mobile smartphones.

While the thought is compelling, softphones, like all VoIP endpoints, are typically complex [for the carrier] to deploy and difficult for individual enterprise employees or IT managers to install. Effectively eradicating the need for client-side configuration, Metaswitch's exclusive SIP Provisioning Server dramatically simplifies wide-scale business and consumer deployments for both the service provider and end user. In addition, the Metaswitch Service Assurance Server extends unique proactive and reactive analysis capabilities to network managers, affording an unprecedented quality of experience while significantly reducing mean time to repair metrics.

The reason your customers are cutting the cord is that voice is no longer tied to it. The new twisted pair changes that dynamic and it can be realized with solutions built on Metaswitch.

References: 1. Skype survey; 2. Wikipedia 'Telecommuting'; 3. Wikipedia 'Homesourcing'; 4. Gartner; 5. CareerBuilder survey; 6. pingdom.com research; 7. Skype survey