

Solution Centre

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Real Time Converged Communications with Presence

Real-time converged communications is becoming a business imperative. When coupled with universal presence status indication, it opens up whole new ways of working that have a positive impact on an enterprise's productivity.

Different organisations have specific needs and get particular benefits from such technologies. This documents some observations other have made which may be applicable in different environments.

Conceptually this is like a business class, closed, feature rich, public IM and Skype system, with a presence engine which integrates with most things, meaning peoples presence and availability can be determined, whether they are at their desk or on the move. There is a significant range of other features of benefit.

IM and telephony are the most obvious real time communication systems While some may run IM internally and others may even risk the use of public IM services, neither of these offer the benefits available from a fully integrated, secure, authenticated fully recorded, end to end encrypted, time stamped and universally accessible system. The world evolves and this solution offers significantly more than chat. Whether in a closed or a public facing environment, where communication is of the essence, this solution can bring many advantages.

Many enterprises are not crying out for IM, but that is often because of the perception of what IM is, or used to be, rather than thinking about how the new converged technology can be applied. Part of the aim of this document is to highlight ways others have perceived the benefit and the resultant uses. After all, many customers use IM in their personal lives so they might think well of organisations that allow them to use it for business.



Security and Accessibility

Being hosted in the network makes it universally available, but with flexible walls around means it is accessible by invite only.

As a hosted solution, from decision to deployment takes hours. This normally takes months for a conventional enterprise IM deployment; or even longer if you want decent presence integration and even then that assumes all the prerequisites are met.

Can be run as a deployed system, rather than hosted.

All IM traffic within the system is end to end encrypted (in flight and on archive) and everything is recorded.

The standard client is a Windows application, but equally customers or users running other operating systems, or who are outside the firewall could use an AJAX client - in this way they don't have to install anything or worry about firewalls and the entire conversation is still end to end encrypted.

The J2ME client gives integration with mobile phones, PDAs, etc. so aside from the ability to use IM from the mobile, it also means presence can be displayed for users on mobile devices.

IM to SMS and SMS to IM means even non-smart phones remain in contact.

Controlled gateways to the outside world allow restrictions on who comes in as well as who can go out. Controlled means you can allow mike25@yahoo.com in, but prevent mike26@yahoo.com.

Server based federation with other systems can be enabled. Server based rather than client/server based federation means the system still records all the conversations and has the same controls as normal.

You can also connect to Microsoft LCS and Lotus Sametime.

Presence Benefits

The ability to see "presence" can save a lot of time and money. There is no point calling the land line, if the presence indication shows the person is on their mobile.

Integration with telephony systems, mobiles and applications means presence is ubiquitous. Wanting to get hold of someone in a different time zone is a whole lot easier when you can see who is in the remote office.

Likewise, being able to see who is available in a cubicle in the same room can make life so much easier when you want a quick answer.

Imagine being on the phone to a customer and you need to get, say a tax specialist involved in the call. Conventionally one would phone a known tax specialist, who may or may not be at their desk. The next thing to try is to call the tax department and hope someone picks up the phone. If that doesn't work, go through to switchboard and see if they can find someone. How much easier to just look at the presence state of the entire tax department and just ping a suitable person an IM and get them directly involved with the customer.



Other Features

- IM2TEAM allows for messages to be sent to a group of people. This can be internally – to the purchasing department for example, or could be from an external link – to the sales or customer service departments perhaps.
- The system can perform skills-based routing, based on content, so with IM2TEAM the message can be directed to the most suitable person to deal with that subject.
- An integrated soft phone gives the advantages of Skype, without the risk to the business as there is no danger of becoming a super node and there is no clever work going on to disguise the traffic through port hopping etc.
- The User Management System allows full control of the system. Control can be devolved to the most appropriate level, be that departmental or functional.
- RSS feeds and other news feeds can be setup on the client
- IM to SMS and SMS to IM
- IM to email
- Secure links, for example single sign-on support or confidential log-on information, such as bank account details.

- E-Meetings, one to one or group
- Secure file transfer
- Searchable archive

Lateral Thinking is the Key

To show how some lateral thinking can bring a raft of new uses, some variations on these themes may be applicable.

In trading environments, the ability to “invite” customers and trading partners on to your secure, recorded, time stamped and encrypted system with no need for them to install anything or change firewall settings, through the use of the AJAX client, is hugely convenient and much safer than trader resorting to using mobile phones and other high risk work-arounds, where they perceive benefits from real time communications.

One bank is planning to send statements via secure email, with embedded IM2TEAM buttons, so if the customer has a question they click the button and have the conversation. The whole conversation is recorded and a copy of the recording can be sent to the customer for their records, showing a reference, the planned actions and the outcome. Much better than having them phone back in a couple of weeks saying I can't remember when I called or who I spoke to but I haven't heard anything yet....

The current worry in the media about call centre operatives stealing customer security details can be eliminated. Use IM2TEAM from your website to the call centre, the system can authenticate the customer and just bring up the pertinent details to the operative.

Most organisations that successfully manage the deployment of IM note significant improvements in productivity, taking the call centre again, the operative can probably hold 5 or 6 concurrent chats, but can only handle one phone call.



IM is accent neutral, so customers can make no assumption about location of origin of the person on the chat and there is no danger of mishearing critical information.

Skills based routing means the message can be delivered to the appropriate person or team, without the customer having to wade through endless; annoying levels of voice based routing menus.

Content filtering can allow redirection of offensive "irate customer speak", to a supervisor to protect call centre staff.

Some schools have a problem contacting parents, but IM to SMS can make that a breeze.

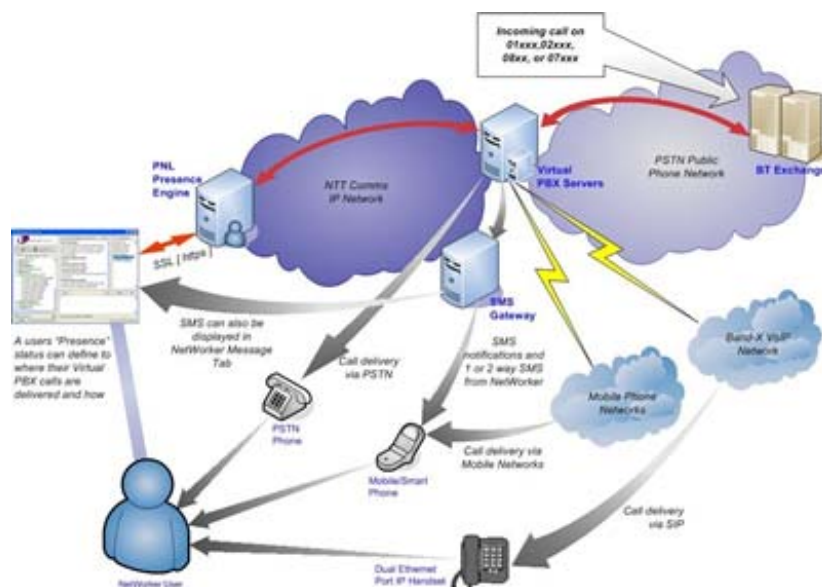
Some universities are worried about the duty of care post Virginia Tech and with its ubiquitous connectivity this allows simple and fast method of contacting lots of people very quickly.

Equally, in a corporate environment, if senior management want to tell all staff they have been awarded a 10% pay rise, one click would do it.

Some use the AJAX client like a "light client" and relate it to Outlook Web Access.

Skills groups allow an employee talking to a customer on the phone or IM and they need a "tax expert", they can look for who is available (presence) in the tax expert group, send them an IM and get them on the call.

On conference calls, quick internal IMs can sort out "how are we going to respond", or "who is taking this action", or "can we do that" type conversations without interrupting the flow of the call or affecting the customer or supplier.



In summary:

- Simple to deploy
- Single interface launch pad for converged real-time communications
- Fully integrated presence to establish the availability of others for real-time communications regardless of their location
- Improved convenience for the customer (24 x 7 from anywhere in the world at zero cost)
- Improved security (limit access to confidential information)
- Improved communication (as open or closed as required)
- Improved productivity (concurrent conversations and elimination of telephone tennis)
- Improved call routing flexibility (distributed)
- Improved perception (accent elimination, speed of response and recording)
- Everything recorded and easily searchable
- Customer can have a record of conversation
- Improved customer satisfaction and retention

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