

Perdition

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By Matt Brunk

It's a road traveled and for all the right reasons more will be on this road when moving ahead with their corporate telephony plans.

Is there a failsafe to keep telecom managers and IT gurus out of perdition?

Short answer is no.

The market (IMHO) has created this "condition" as have the forces of technology, change, competitiveness and the unknown. In short, convergence and how to effectively converge the right applications and services with the right partners and providers is more rocket science than what others would have you believe.

Microsoft and their followers think the IP-PBX is dead, Cisco and their gang think the PBX is dead, analysts and more marketing types than I can recall have pegged the TDM wares, Hybrid IP-PBXs and legacy gear as dinosaurs or virtually dead too.

The reality is they are all wrong and for the right reasons. It comes down to change. Don't expect TDM manufacturers to take a leap of the nearest bridge- or teaming with Microsoft as Nortel didn't prove anything yet. Cisco continues to sell a lot of IP phones world wide and the market is huge. Yet- when I spy with my little eye all the telephone systems I see everyday- they remain largely TDM. When I call vendors that are on IP systems and the call quality is lousy and I know before they do that they are in fact on an IP system, rest assured I let them know. The larger enterprises deploying IP are making too many mistakes and yes, people do notice - at least I do.

By virtual show of hands how many users and corporate executives are willing to place their enterprise voice onto a platform that has bugs, issues, holes, instabilities and security vulnerabilities? I've been told that my expectations are too high and that software will never be error free and constantly reminded about buggy whips and the Edsel. I wouldn't drive an Edsel but I would drive a Tucker and that isn't much comfort either - look at how many weren't made.

Running telephony is in fact harder than what the experts would have you believe. It's refreshing when the top dogs get stumped and that's when I feel genuine relief. The lesson I heard at VoiceCon in Orlando is simple. IP Telephony is complicated and it does require a lot of resources and tools. Two industry experts in Troubleshooting Converged Networks sat next to me and told that to the audience. Terry Slattery, CTO of **Netcordia** and Choon Shim, CEO of **WideArea Systems** know why and what causes the ailments I see everyday in IP telephony. They can articulate and teach guys in the trenches what it is that we are experiencing and do it with down to earth terms. But it's still complicated.

There are no easy answers and all the fluff and marketing may convince others that the PBXs including the Hybrids, TDMs and even IP-PBXs are dead but they have failed to convince the many, many, many users of these wares. Instead of telling us how about showing? I used to think that installing and maintaining IP telephony was akin to being on a submarine. Now, I think it's more like flying. A controlled crash.

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