

Blogs - Matt Brunk

Hosted VoIP vs IP-PBX Mini Series

PRINT

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Written by Matt Brunk

Outsourcing any enterprise's telephone system leaves one to ponder many questions. Then, taking on an IP-PBX solution means you need to tackle some tough questions and issues too. In either case both solutions may be right -- but which one is best for you?



In this mini-series, I want to note a "human" pattern of behavior. Let Harvard or someone else study it -- I know it and by knowing it works as a benefit, at least for me. Using it keeps me out of hot water most of the time and you can call it a "qualification", or whatever fits.

Disclaimer: I'm not against hosted solutions and I'm not going to tell you all my secrets but I'll do my best in giving you some insight.

Personality of the enterprise or those patterns of human behavior. This is a key indicator for me. There are red flags that should go up when you hear customer/user comments such as:

"Our CEO doesn't like complications and just wants to push a button on the phone to do..."

"What's a firewall? ... No, our IT department is located in the janitorial closet."

"We rely on our phones for revenue, they cannot be down."

"This is our third telephone system in the past four years."

While these comments may make great medicine for hosted providers to lay claim and state that these customers are perfect candidates for hosted solutions, I'd proceed with extreme caution. These comments shouldn't be the norm for L-enterprise with the exception of relying upon phones for revenue or as mission critical tools (sometimes both).

Customers will exhibit several traits or characteristics of tolerance and suitability and there's no way I'd endorse a hosted solution for those described above -- at least not today. And I probably won't put them into an IP-PBX either. So what would I do? That comes later.

As we explore these customers and get to know about what they want, need and discover their expectations, then we can begin to determine our direction. It's getting to the "meeting of the minds", and while this can be a landmine for some, it remains an important exercise to get beyond the blind "faith" that customers demonstrate in procuring their new telephony solutions.

There are customers quick to point out that "revenue" and "phones" go hand in hand and they are aware that their 'voice' is indeed mission critical. In the SMB/E space there's a lot of outsourcing of IT and other functions yet these same companies depend upon a core infrastructure of phones and access to the web. Then, customers operating their businesses "simplistically", or very flat, do tend to have a near-zero (or zero) tolerance of pain and wouldn't suffer any prolonged outage -- especially if that meant all the phones and Internet access were down simultaneously. Outages of any kind take an adverse affect on lean and mean organizations and this is indicative to how they can continue on in their business and what it costs them to react to downtime. This level of customer tolerance is a tough requirement to satisfy. While the demand for five nines can be virtually elastic within the organization, it can be very definitive on the day the service goes down.

Hosted Providers argue that there's only one finger to point with hosted solutions and our customers have fewer vendor headaches.

I believe that's a myth. Hosted providers likely don't run cables and maintain the infrastructure on-site (LAN, switching, power, UPS and auxiliary equipment and applications). Not everything in service is done off-site, nor can it all be done remotely. Packetizing the voice and then converging traffic creates a demarcation without borders. There's just as much, if not more, finger pointing in anything that you do with VoIP. As anyone working with any carrier has experienced over time, there's always finger pointing. Those unresolved issues can become "embedded features" with the passage of time and can cause inaction in either party to push towards resolution. This is where carriers of any class can prevail: they can simply wear the customers down. This occurs the moment the customer decides to just live with the problem because they can't allocate any more resources to correct the issue with their carrier. An uncontested element of risk that faces most hosted provider solutions is access. The last mile is provided by whom? When the access facilities aren't owned by the hosting provider then you can count on the finger pointing to begin.

Comment on this article

Leave your comments (Show/Hide Form)

Other Visitors Comments

There are no comments currently....

Close Window