



Accelerate the ROI of Your VoIP Investment

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Accelerate the ROI of Your VoIP Investment

Enterprise conferencing may be the killer application for corporate VoIP initiatives. This increasingly popular IP technology enhances the value of IP telephony infrastructures by unifying voice, Web, and video conferencing into a single enterprise-wide application. Adding this application to your VoIP strategy creates immediate — and significant — economic benefits, drives highly visible productivity improvements, and increases security for key business communications.

Overview

According to industry analysts, a rapidly growing number of companies either plan to or have already begun their deployment of VoIP technology. The promise of cost savings and new business applications are driving this trend.

But making the transition is not simple. Expensive, complex, and time-consuming infrastructure and desktop equipment upgrades hit the IT budget well before any measurable ROI. Savvy network and IT executives legitimately wonder how they can show larger, more immediate, and more visible returns in the early stages of VoIP deployment. Enterprise conferencing provides the answer.

A real-time communication and collaboration tool, enterprise conferencing integrates the functionality of voice, Web, and video conferencing in one IP-based software application. Designed for use by everyone in your organization, like email, enterprise conferencing dramatically improves the ROI of your VoIP investment by:

- Delivering incremental cost savings that may dwarf those of the direct VoIP initiative itself,
- Expanding the business productivity benefits of voice, Web and video conferencing to a much larger group of employees,
- Raising the level of security for voice and Web conferencing, and
- Reducing your IT group's conference support workload.

Enterprise Conferencing Defined

Most businesses use some combination of teleconferencing, Web conferencing, and video conferencing in their daily operations. Enterprise conferencing integrates these three tools into a single IP-based software platform that delivers:

- A complete range of live conferencing and collaboration capabilities, including stand-alone voice conferences, Web meetings, eLearning classes, marketing seminars, all-hands broadcasts and on-demand recordings for use by employees as well as external prospects, partners and suppliers;
- A fixed-price, unlimited-use pricing framework, enabling you to offer conferencing to everyone in your organization, like email;
- A “blended” deployment model, combining the cost savings, security, and control of on-site software with the rapid start-up, global reach, and overflow/failover protection of a hosted service;
- Integration with your company’s existing multi-vendor IT infrastructure, enhancing security, accelerating user adoption, and simplifying administration;
- Alignment of corporate conferencing expenditures with your IP telephony strategy, while leveraging existing TDM investments.



Increase Cost Savings

VoIP infrastructure investments save money because they enable you to bypass long-distance telephone tolls; they require you to staff and maintain only a single integrated network for voice and data; and they reduce your requirements for outside services to perform routine activities such as moves, adds, and changes.

Enterprise conferencing brings additional economic return on your VoIP investment by:

- Reducing business travel expenses,
- Drastically reducing high, unpredictable usage-based Web and voice conferencing expenses,
- Pulling forward savings that would otherwise be deferred until completion of the IP telephony rollout, and
- Deferring capital expenses for the purchase of IP telephone handsets.

Reducing travel expenses

Voice, Web, and video conferencing have amply demonstrated their ability to significantly reduce business travel expenses. While never intended to replace the majority of face-to-face interactions, companies find that they can substitute electronic interaction for about 25 percent of in-person meetings and training activities. And the resulting cost savings are substantial, often running into the millions of dollars.

Cutting overall conferencing costs in half

Most companies spend more than they realize — and more than they need to — on voice, Web, and video conferencing. Driven by per-minute pricing and overage penalties, these costs range from \$150–\$300 per person, per year. While these services deliver real value, they do so at a premium, and in a manner which is unpredictable and difficult to manage. Enterprise conferencing significantly reduces this expenditure, often cutting overall conferencing expenses by half.

It does this by:

- Replacing the services' usage-based pricing with the fixed price/unlimited use economics of software,
- Providing all-inclusive conferencing functionality in a single product, and
- Leveraging your converged network rather than using an external service provider in communication-intensive locations.

Even companies using hardware-based on-premise conferencing bridges can benefit by turning to software-based enterprise conferencing, which:

- Reduces ongoing proprietary hardware equipment and maintenance expenses,
- Ends long-distance charges generated by calls into centralized conference locations, and
- Eliminates the need for additional Web and video conferencing services.

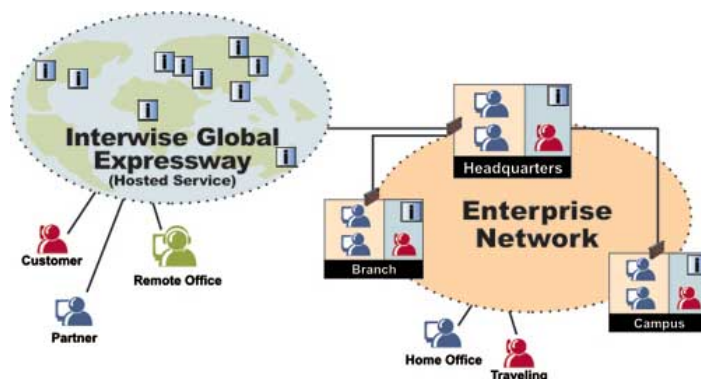
Metso, a global engineering and technology company, provides an example of the level of cost reduction that enterprise conferencing creates through conference call and travel savings alone. Metso estimates that it saved more than \$4.2 million in these two areas during 2005 through the use of enterprise conferencing. These savings were achieved with a less than 50 percent deployment to the company's 20,000 employees worldwide.

Getting benefits before VoIP deployment is complete

For a medium- or large-sized enterprise, the transition to IP telephony is often a multiyear endeavor. Although toll bypass savings can be achieved in the early stages of the project, the remaining economic benefits are realized only when the deployment is complete.

While enterprise conferencing relies on IP connectivity, it does not require a fully deployed converged network to deliver its benefits. The application also furnishes value in a partially deployed VoIP environment by integrating an on-site software component with a companion hosted conferencing service.

Locations that have installed IP telephony infrastructures bring the conferencing software on-site, while offices



Blended deployment provides the best of both worlds: Customer's on-site software extended by a global hosted service.

without this infrastructure access the conferencing application via the integrated hosted service. The combination of this “blended” in-house/hosted deployment working together with a fixed price/unlimited usage business model allows your organization to realize the significant cost savings of enterprise conferencing — regardless of your current level of IP telephony deployment.

Deferring capital expense

The “last mile” of a VoIP initiative requires putting IP phones, costing \$300 per unit or more, on your employees’ desktops. This final stage of the project represents a significant capital expense — on top of your already sizeable network investment.

Enterprise conferencing defers this expense because it doesn’t require IP phones for its operation. The application certainly utilizes any IP phones already installed in new offices or brought in when old equipment is retired. But enterprise conferencing solutions also take a TDM signal from existing analog phones and convert it to IP at the converged network edge, deferring your need for a specialized IP handset. This allows regular phone users, mobile phone users, IP phone users, and even people listening to the voice component of the conference on their computers to act as full and equal participants in enterprise conferencing meetings and events. This way, organizations start enjoying the benefits of VoIP even before installing its classic end point — the IP phone.

Expand Productivity Gains

VoIP justifies itself by giving companies more direct control over their communications environments and allowing them to respond more quickly to business opportunities. But the IP telephony infrastructure itself has little impact on productivity or efficiency. Enterprise conferencing does.

In addition to cutting costs, enterprise conferencing delivers proven productivity benefits across your organization. Delivering these benefits through the converged network immediately and visibly increases its value as a core business tool and as an investment.

Providing business productivity improvements across the entire organization

On a daily basis, thousands of companies worldwide take advantage of voice, Web, and video conferencing to enable sales reps to call on more prospects, marketing teams to create more potential leads and support more partners, and instructors to train more customers. Similarly, by fostering more frequent interactions in sessions that can easily include off-site participants who could not otherwise attend, these technologies improve the effectiveness of key business processes, such as the management of distributed projects, collaborative forecasting, and multiparty contract negotiations.

In most companies, the usage-based pricing of point conferencing products limits their use to a select minority of employees. By contrast, enterprise conferencing is designed —both technically and economically— to be given to everyone in the company, like email. This allows companies to extend this key application to everyone in their organization, expanding the scope of business productivity gains.

Raising the visibility of network infrastructure investments

Like many infrastructure projects, VoIP investments are virtually invisible to end users. IT managers feel this limited visibility at budget time, when they must weigh these investments against other higher profile technologies, and justify their choices.

The rapid economic and productivity benefits delivered by enterprise conferencing showcase the value of IP telephony investments both to business users and to corporate executives. Designed for organization-wide deployment, enterprise conferencing delivers an array of benefits with widespread visibility.

Consider the all-hands company or divisional meeting. When senior managers want to connect with large groups of employees to announce performance results, explain strategic decisions, or simply get different groups working more closely, they discover these sessions are time-consuming to set up and expensive to conduct.

In contrast, enterprise conferencing allows full voice, Web, and video broadcasts to thousands of employees to be scheduled within minutes, implemented quickly, and automatically recorded for on-demand use by people who missed the original event. Instead of costing thousands or tens of thousands of dollars through an external service, enterprise conferencing delivers these events as part of the existing software license.

Enhance Security

TDM voice conferencing may be the most vulnerable part of your company's communications infrastructure. Enterprise conferencing can significantly improve this situation by:

- Bringing it behind the firewall,
- Integrating it with existing security investments (e.g., reverse proxy systems, directory services systems, single sign-on tools, etc.),
- Allowing meeting organizers to require both phone and Web participants to authenticate against the enterprise directory and predetermined attendee and/or employee lists, and
- Adding a Web-based visual monitoring capability.

Utilizing conferencing on the enterprise network ensures that both the live voice, Web, or video conference itself and any associated meeting materials, recordings, and sensitive participant information stay behind your organization's firewall, rather than traveling over the open Internet to a third-party service provider. This gives your organization greater control and allows you to integrate conferencing into your existing security model.

Reduce IT Workload

Most companies with a thousand or more employees and multiple geographic locations engage in numerous meetings, phone conferences, and other collaborative activities, internally and with customers, prospects, partners, and suppliers. According to Gartner, business users' expectations are rising with regard to the quality and availability of tools to support these interactions. If corporate IT groups do not supply adequate tools, individual groups will procure them for themselves. Gartner warns that if left unchecked, the result will be "collaboration chaos."¹

Enterprise conferencing allows corporate IT groups to support their organizations' growing need for conferencing and collaboration tools in a way that reduces the IT teams' workload. It does this by:

- Providing a single, enterprise-wide solution,
- Integrating the solution with existing administrative tools and processes, and
- Aligning conferencing with the broader IP telephony strategy.

¹ Nikos Drakos, Tom Austin, Tom Eid, Kathy Harris, and Jeffrey Mann. 3 February 2006. Findings from the Gartner 2006 Global Research Meeting: Fulfilling Users' Collaboration Expectations. ID Number: G00137548

Consolidating multiple products in one enterprise-wide solution

Most companies use several different services for voice, Web, and video conferencing, all provided by different vendors and billed separately on a per-use basis. This requires IT to support multiple overlapping products and makes it difficult to understand overall conferencing costs, let alone control them.

Enterprise conferencing replaces disparate systems with a single, company-wide, software-based standard. This approach:

- Reduces the number of vendors and products your IT department needs to manage,
- Decreases end-user training requirements, and
- Centralizes the costs of multiple services in one easy-to-monitor solution.

Simplifying IT administration and support

Enterprise conferencing integrates effectively with existing user management tools, security frameworks, and business applications, allowing your organization to maximize the value of its existing IT investment. For example:

- Integrating conferencing with familiar scheduling tools such as Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes, or customer-specific portals accelerates adoption and minimizes user support calls, and
- On-going administration is simplified by using existing directory services and Single Sign On (SSO) tools.

Aligning conferencing with the corporate IP telephony strategy

As a native IP software application designed to integrate easily into a multivendor technology environment, enterprise conferencing aligns with both your company's current and future IP telephony strategy.

Equally important, enterprise conferencing enables simple, cost-effective, IP-based communications for users during what will inevitably be an extended transition period as your organization makes the move to VoIP.

It does this in two ways:

- The application's ability to work with TDM and VoIP technologies simultaneously allows individual participants using different voice protocols to fully interact in a single meeting, and
- The blended on-site/hosted deployment model enables company-wide usage even before full deployment of the converged network.

Conclusion

Enterprise conferencing is, in many respects, *the* killer application for converged networks. It allows businesses to significantly increase cost savings, deliver a powerful and highly visible productivity-enhancing tool to the entire workforce, and simplify the work your IT teams do to deliver and support your company's growing volume of conferencing and collaboration.

Specific benefits from adding enterprise conferencing to your VoIP strategy include:

- Accelerating the ROI from your VoIP investment,
- Cutting your company's overall conferencing and collaboration expense by half,
- Giving the benefit of unlimited voice, Web, and video conferencing to everyone in your company,
- Enhancing the security of your conferencing and collaboration, and
- Smoothing the transition to IP across your entire organization.

Tangible benefits like these make enterprise conferencing a great way to demonstrate the value of converged network investments. Companies embracing VoIP without enterprise conferencing are missing out on an important opportunity.

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