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THE INS AND OUTS OF SIP TRUNKING

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The business world remains in a constant state of flux as companies come and go and new technologies inundate the workplace. While the private sector began in the era of pen and paper, the rapid evolution of IT services means that no sensible organization avoids the use of digital solutions. Today, a number of tools can improve operations, reduce costs and allow even the smallest companies gain a competitive advantage over rival enterprises with a larger volume of exhaustible resources.

The last few years sped things up even more, especially in regard to collaboration. Communication is and always will be a critical characteristic of a successful company. Organizations with employees that cannot effectively work together and interact efficiently will not be able to keep pace with the ongoing transformations in the workplace to stay relevant and competitive with rival businesses.

While the telecommunications industry experienced a number of major transformations, two have had a more significant impact than others. The advent of mobility and the consumerization of IT has forever changed how individuals interact with one another. Now, people can pull out their smartphones or tablets and communicate with clients, colleagues and partners from virtually anywhere at any time. This was unheard of 20 years ago, when the desk phone represented the only available connection point between consumer and corporate representative.

The other major changeover came with the introduction of IP technologies. Rather than using the outdated land line phone for communicating with individuals outside the office, organizations are working with trusted VoIP providers to consolidate voice and data over a single connection. Because most companies today already use the internet, the logical choice was to converge voice into the network to reduce costs and improve the scalability and flexibility of the business phone system.

In the coming years, VoIP will continue to play a vital role in the development of enterprise communications, quickly moving in to take the place of the antiquated land line solutions that are constantly plagued with outages and quality issues that impair productivity collaboration. Fortunately, a number of unique communication technologies at the enterprise's disposal today can enhance operations.

An introduction to SIP trunking

Forward-thinking businesses, both large and small, recognize that being competitive means leveraging the most innovative and cutting-edge solutions available on the market. SIP trunking is one of these.



In a general sense, SIP trunking is an application layer-based protocol that enables individuals to make calls and other interactions over the IP network. Decision-makers can consult with their internet telephone service provider (ITSP) to implement SIP trunks that connect a firm's PBX system to the public switch telephone network (PSTN) through the internet. In doing so, organizations can experience a number of unique benefits that are not available through the use of traditional land line services.

Unlike legacy collaborative technologies, SIP trunking can provide businesses with benefits on multiple layers. This becomes especially important as companies struggle through the ongoing macroeconomic crisis that is putting pressure on decision-makers to limit spending wherever possible. In the past, organizations didn't necessarily have to worry about investing in new technologies, as new solutions were simpler and it was easier to see which ones would provide financial benefits.

Today's private sector is much different, however, as the wrong investments can snowball into long-term problems that lead to inefficient operations, wasted resources and impair a firm's ability to stay relevant. The latter in particular can complicate business strategies even more, as the business world is so fiercely competitive that organizations struggling to keep pace will find themselves at the back of the pack.

Because communication remains critical to succeeding in today's highly mobile and tech-savvy workplace, updating a business phone system can give firms an edge over the competition and provide substantial long-term benefits. These advantages often include reduced expenses, improved efficiency and more effective client relationship management strategies - all of which strengthen a company's odds of achieving long-term success.

Although the private sector can easily be inundated by the overwhelming number of new telecommunication services on the market, decision-makers need to prioritize sensibly. Rather than keeping the traditional land line service in action, executives should consider implementing SIP trunking technologies, which provide the aforementioned advantages without inviting unnecessary complication or complexity.

What is the difference between SIP trunking and other voice services?

Session initiation protocol, or SIP, was developed in the 1990s and recently gained a lot of momentum in the private sector, especially as decision-makers struggle with today's ongoing macroeconomic crisis. Unlike traditional voice services, SIP is a standards-based technology that exists in the application layer, making it agnostic toward different types of media. This means that companies using SIP solutions can leverage multiple methods of communication through a single system, including voice, messaging and even video connections.

Specifically, SIP does not define the type of media being transmitted. Instead, the technology simply manages the transmission, making it easier for companies to collaborate within a particular budget.

An SIP trunk, on the other hand, is something else entirely. In the past, telephony solutions would use "trunks" as a



channel of communicating between two parties. With regards to SIP, trunking is the device that connects voice and data packages between the IP-PBX system and the ITSPs network.

When a large enterprise or small business leverages SIP trunking solutions, they can reduce expenses without jeopardizing voice quality, as the most common service integrated with SIP is VoIP, or voice over IP. A study of nearly 300 IT professionals by Webtorials in late 2012 revealed that SIP trunking is picking up speed in the private sector as companies of all sizes implement the tools to improve operations and minimize costs. In fact, approximately one third of organizations are now using SIP trunking, while roughly two thirds are either significantly or extensively using VoIP.

In most cases, decision-makers using SIP trunking are also incorporating unified communications into their collaborative strategies. Unified communications is a particularly unique telecommunications system, as it enables executives to integrate VoIP - as well as other voice solutions - video conferencing, instant messaging and presence technologies into a single platform. By using unified communications, companies of all sizes can enhance operations and collaboration through consolidation, which is often the top reason for deploying the service in the first place. Additionally, unified communications functionality can be augmented through the use of SIP - yet another reason companies should be deploying SIP.

Whether or not decision-makers decide to use SIP trunking with their VoIP or unified communications strategies, the market for the technology is on the rise. A recent report by the analysts at Infonetics Research forecast SIP trunking services to expand at a compound annual growth rate of more than 50 percent between 2011 and 2015. This suggests that executives across industries are recognizing the potential advantages associated with implementing an SIP trunking system.

Forward-thinking decision-makers who want to stay competitive with the rest of their respective industry need to consider how adopting SIP trunking will provide their organization with unique attributes that will make it easier to succeed in the coming years. Deploying SIP trunking should not be done on a whim, however - impulsively embracing any technology without first thinking how those solutions will affect operations can introduce severe consequences. For this reason, executives must consider their enterprise's specific goals, capabilities and requirements, as well as the prospective benefits that come hand in hand with SIP trunking.

Why should I consider SIP trunking for my company?

In today's fast-paced business world, waiting too long to deploy a so-called "next-generation" technology can impair an organization's ability to remain relevant in the future. With that said, it is also critical that business and IT managers align priorities to ensure any implementation will provide long-term profit to the company as a whole. In other words, executives need to take a step back and look at SIP trunking holistically, assessing whether their firm will be able to embrace the potential advantages of using the system.

SIP can be financially profitable

As companies of all sizes continue to struggle through today's ongoing macroeconomic crisis, decision-makers need to



find as many ways as possible to reduce expenses without impairing operations. Neglecting to eliminate wasted resources can introduce significant long-term problems. Fortunately, SIP trunking can help enterprises decrease unnecessary spending and altogether erase some budget allocations that are no longer needed.

Of the enterprises currently leveraging SIP trunking technologies, more than two-thirds said the prospect of cutting costs had a major influence in their decision to use the services, Webtorials reported. This is largely because companies have the ability to reduce expenses by up to 33 percent when using SIP trunking. These savings can introduce a number of opportunities for organizations by freeing up the budget and giving executives the ability to invest in other tools that can support long-term growth.

There are a number of ways SIP can help firms financially, including by reducing the costs associated with making long-distance calls. Unlike traditional land line services, IP telephony solutions move both data and voice over the internet, allowing calls to be transferred as efficiently and inexpensively as information. These savings can add up over time and have the ability to lower conventional telephony bills by up to 75 percent.

By deploying SIP trunking services and experiencing these savings, organizations can ensure they have enough money to survive and, more importantly, benefit in the long run.

SIP can enhance operations

Because communication is critical to success in today's highly disparate and fast-paced private sector, executives need to ensure employees have the ability to effectively collaborate with colleagues, partners and customers. If the workforce continues to struggle because of inefficient interactions with varying departments and individuals, the company as a whole will not be able function in an effective way, thereby reducing an organization's chances of success.

When SIP trunking is used, however, companies can worry less about failing to meet expectations and instead think about what they can do to fill up the free time that comes hand in hand with leveraging an advanced telecommunications system. The Webtorials study revealed that firms using VoIP and SIP trunking were able to recover 23 percent of the productivity lost when utilizing an outdated telecom platform. In large enterprises, this equates to slightly more than 1.2 hours gained per day per employee - a substantial amount of time for any organization.

IP telephony solutions are also extremely resilient, meaning they are able to hand a larger workload with fewer outages, a common problem among firms still using antiquated collaborative solutions. These disruptions can do more than impact current operations, as system failures cause prospective and even long-term clients to lose faith in the business. This reputation for poor service and unreliability will negatively contribute to future sales and hires, making it harder for companies to get back on track and succeed.

A properly deployed SIP trunking system can negate these concerns by boosting communications in and outside the workplace.



SIP can boost disaster recovery

After recently witnessing the catastrophic short and long-term impact Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Bopha and the wild-fires in the Western United States had on the private sector, decision-makers are more inclined than ever to develop and implement a robust disaster recovery program. If companies do not have a working business continuity strategy, they will continue to encounter hurdles in the effort to stay safe.

Because most IP-based phones can identify themselves with the corporate network, SIP trunking services are plug and play in nature. This means decision-makers can easily bring communications back online by unplugging an endpoint and connecting it to the system from another location. Having this ability means executives can keep downtime to a minimum and quickly restore operations, allowing employees to get back to carrying out time-sensitive tasks.

Additionally, the extension that must be reconnected to the network doesn't even have to be an IP telephone. This is especially relevant in today's highly mobile private sector, in which individuals will likely be using personal smartphones and tablets when working outside the office - a common occurrence in the wake of a natural or man-made disaster.

By working with a trusted SIP provider, decision-makers can ensure they implement a system that caters to their unique needs in the event of an emergency.

SIP is reliable and provides higher quality voice

In the past, managing complex phone systems was a daunting task that dug deep into the budget, impairing future spending habits and encouraging continuous investing in IT support that could help maintain communications. This is no longer the case when a company transitions to SIP, as the technology makes it easier than ever to own and leverage a high-quality communications platform.

Unlike antiquated phone systems that required maintenance on each endpoint, SIP acts as a centralized computer that can force adjustments and policy changes on each of its connection points. This means that a single change can be applied to virtually every phone using the system, reducing financial expenses and physical labor.

IP-telephony is inherently of better quality than traditional voice solutions, but decision-makers can ensure this by applying robust quality of service settings. In other words, decision-makers can prioritize voice packages over data sets being transferred through the web, strengthening communications and making it easier for disparate parties to collaborate at any time, regardless of external circumstances, such as natural or man-made disasters.

Executives can also use edge devices to ensure SIP trunking networks are always reliable. These tools act as watchdogs that monitor any changes happening in network availability. If a connection is lost to the central equipment, these edge devices can reroute calls to an alternative PSTN gateway. Conversely, if the internet is down, SIP services can ensure that local, in-house collaboration can still exist.

When considering implementing an SIP trunking service, executives need to work with providers to ensure the system is reliable and keep communications a priority.



SIP in the contact center

In today's highly competitive business world, customer service can be a significant differentiator between a successful company and one that is doomed to fail. This is an entirely different mantra than the private sector used to repeat, as many decision-makers of the past thought the contact center was simply a never-ending cost. However, many organizations are still struggling as to how they can make call centers more efficient and able to meet client demands.

By investing in SIP trunking, decision-makers can prepare to become the next-generation multi-channel contact center. Having the ability to communicate with individuals through a variety of platforms has become increasingly important during the last several years, especially as consumers now use smartphones, tablets and other devices in virtually every aspect of their daily lives.

As social media, mobility and other collaborative platforms continue to gain momentum in the consumer and business sector, executives need to find a way to back this diverse communication strategy. For this reason, unified communications is gaining significant momentum. When using an SIP-enabled unified communications system, enterprises can support connectivity to solutions such as video conferencing, email, instant messaging and of course social media and mobile endpoints.

Although this approach to the contact center is relatively new, it can provide substantial return on investment by improving overall customer service and developing stronger client relationships, leading to better retention rates. As a result, businesses with next-generation contact centers are more likely to profit than those still only supporting client collaboration through voice and self-service portals alone.

While the benefits behind SIP trunking services range from enhancing productivity to boosting revenue or reforming specific departments of an organization, it is clear that SIP has a significant positive impact on enterprise operations.

The future of telecommunications

Business communication is and will always be an essential aspect to the progressive organization looking to stay relevant and competitive, despite technological and operational changes. Because the IT landscape continues to evolve, decision-makers need to hop on board this train if they are to have any chance of surviving the cut down the road.

Research firm Ovum said SIP trunking in particular is developing into a more holistic and well-rounded technology than it was when it was first introduced to the private sector. Rather than focusing solely on the financial benefits associated with SIP, corporate executives around the world are seeing the bigger picture. In other words, enterprises now recognize that adopting SIP trunking means they can beyond saving money, they can also leverage innovative applications, centralize communication initiatives and integrate collaborative strategies into other mission-critical objectives. This "second wave" of SIP trunking drivers will continue to impact the private sector's decision regarding implementing a new telecommunications system.



Several years from now, the corporate landscape will probably be completely different than it is today, just as the current private sector moves light years ahead of where it was a decade ago. This momentum will carry organizations into a new world of business, enabling forward-thinking executives to implement innovative strategies to gain a competitive advantage over rival firms. In many cases, SIP trunking will be the key that opens the door to a whole new world.

Don't be left behind. Consult a trusted service provider and deploy SIP trunking network today.



