

Empowering the Distributed, Mobile Workforce through VoIP

There are many reasons to enable your remote workforce. Employees on the road can maximize productivity by having the ability to access your complete phone system as if they were sitting at their desk. You can also maximize communication by having the current status of every employee right at your fingertips. And by employing a substantial part of your workforce working from their homes, you can dramatically reduce physical infrastructure costs, including real estate and utilities.

With the right VoIP system, your remote employees can gain:

- The ability to forward calls to any other phone so they never miss important calls
- The ability to forward calls to ring at multiple phones at the same time so callers can reach an employee quickly
- The ability to forward calls to ring at multiple phones in a specific order so an employee can answer the phone they want
- The ability to configure unanswered calls to the office to ring at any other phone
- The ability to configure unanswered calls to the office to ring at multiple phones at the same time
- The ability to configure unanswered calls to the office to ring at multiple phones in a specific order
- The ability to use voice screening to hear caller before deciding to take/reject the call
- The ability to use urgency screening to ensure only urgent calls get through

A VoIP phone system can also enable a full-featured voicemail system which is not tied to any specific location. Regardless of which office a user works out of, they can forward voice messages to any other user or groups of users in the company. With this type of voicemail you can:

- Easily create group voicemail distribution lists
- Access voicemail from any touch tone phone or web-enabled computer
- Forward voicemail messages to anyone via email
- Instantly call back someone who left a message and return to voicemail without hanging up

Presence Management: The Productivity Engine for Remote Employees

Presence Management enables employees to gain the most from remote teleworking. It can integrate multiple communications mediums into a single interface, such as the smart phone. Your team gains the ability to communicate in real time, regardless of what device is being used at the other end. Imagine an employee on the road using a smart phone to contact another staff member who is in a meeting and only has access from their laptop. Communication is instant, enabling on-demand information flow and increasing the mobility and efficiency of your whole company.



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This new capability is made possible because Presence Management, deployed through Unified Communications, is now available on smart phones such as:

- Apple® iPhone®
- Google™ Droid™
- Blackberry®
- Windows® Smart Phones

All that is needed to integrate these phones with your corporate Unified Communication system is a simple application that is easily downloaded and installed on the phone. This eliminates the cost of providing a company cell phone to all employees — a business can make Presence Management available over the phones employees already own.

Presence Management deployed through a smart phone will enable you to see the status of every employee across your organization right from the palm of your hand. You can check on someone's status before making the effort to place the call. For outside callers, the system can redirect calls to other extensions, outside numbers, cell phones, or any other way that the employee in question wants to be reached. And employees can tailor messages to update the caller as to their current status.

Remote Teleworking Strategies

Like any new business strategy, remote teleworking has its risks. To employ a remote teleworking process that enhances productivity, you should carry out an audit to determine the jobs that are best suited for this environment. You should consult all departmental managers, HR, IT and facilities management to build your action plan. Certain managers may perceive remote working as a threat to their level of control. This makes it essential to lay out the benefits to all participants, and move forward in a slow and deliberate fashion. You need to have a clear view of how your corporate culture is going to evolve before your remote teleworking plan is put into action. Once employees are actually operating offsite, be sure that regular interaction is maintained between the workers and managers. Employees still need to feel that they are an active part of the team.

The real key to utilizing a distributed workforce is transparency. A fully-transparent VoIP network means that telephony stations at the corporate location and the remote workers' home offices operate exactly the same. Remote workers can be reached using their 3- or 4-digit office extension the same as when that person is in the office. Conference calls, call transfers, and recorded conversations can all be initiated right from the home office extension. And customers remain completely unaware that the employee is not at the corporate office.

While you need to execute a carefully, well-thought plan to successfully enable your remote employees, the payoff in productivity and potential reductions in capital expenditures make the effort well-worthwhile.



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