

Strategies to Enable the Remote Workforce through VoIP

The drive to build productivity among remote employees is ever-present in today's highly mobile economy. You may be tasked with developing a platform to energize your own remote workforce, but there might still be lingering questions as to how much you can really accomplish with this approach. By examining the underpinnings of VoIP, and Presence Management in particular, we can illustrate what you can achieve and how to get there.

Presence Management: The Productivity Engine for Remote Employees

Presence Management enables employees to gain the most from remote teleworking. It utilizes intelligent value-based call routing for the most effective and accurate routing decisions. And 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.

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 Communications system is a simple UC client that is easily downloaded and installed on the phone. All of these applications are installed directly on the mobile phone and once configured integrate back to the enterprise Unified Communications system. Users can change Presence Management settings right through their personal devices.

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



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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. Remote workers should 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 should be able to be initiated right from a smart phone. And customers should remain completely unaware that the employee is not at the corporate office.

The Value of VoIP

In addition to the productivity benefits of Presence Management, the right VoIP system can deliver:

- 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 the 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

There are many reasons to enable your remote workforce. Not the least of which is the fact that by employing a substantial part of your workforce working from their homes or anywhere offsite, you can dramatically reduce physical infrastructure costs, including real estate and utilities. Your VoIP vendor can guide you in making the right technology selection, and in developing the right strategy to make sure your workforce is performing at their peak in the 21st century.



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