

A Bespoke *solution*

Both sides of the Open Source vs. Bespoke Software divide are passionate about their own solutions and here David Dadds, Managing Director of Vanilla IP looks at why he chose to build his service offerings around the Broadsoft platform.



David Dadds of Vanilla IP

Let me begin by stating that when it comes to hosted telephony I believe Asterisk-based open source solutions work fine in many applications and that they have a part to play in the market. There are however many reasons why we chose not to follow that route and instead, some six years ago, made the not insignificant investment in our own Broadsoft platform around which we have built, and continue to build, our wide range of services for the channel.

Today, the Broadsoft platform has been deployed by more than 450 service providers like Vanilla IP, around the world. In fact, 15 of the world's largest 25 telecoms carriers are running Broadsoft. This gives us and our resellers some assurance about their commitment to R&D long-term. Sitting firmly behind the product are some 250-plus software developers and support engineers ensuring the reliability of that platform and its long-term future by way of continual product and feature development.

From the outset Broadsoft was designed as a carrier-grade switch and if you don't start off from that position then it is always going to be difficult to change horses mid stream.

We don't see Asterisk providers as primary competition as they are typically more active in the smaller, sub-10 extension, market. If the customer requirement is for a small, fairly basic set-up, it can be harder to differentiate your offer except on price and in those scenarios Asterisk competes.

We honestly do not see Asterisk in bids

where the customer has a greater emphasis on functionality, service and reliability. In our experience we find that resellers that enjoy the most success are those that do not sell on price.

The only reason a service provider would deploy Asterisk is because the initial investment is lower.

We would however question that premise as a concept. For sure the CAPEX element of an open source platform is low or no cost but the ongoing OPEX cannot be ignored. Looking at many of the open source telephony suppliers we find that behind the front desk they have an army of software guys employed just to keep the nuts and bolts of their solution up and running. This is a heavy price to pay for a 'free' solution.

Whilst many of these suppliers may point to these software guys developing applications for their open source platforms – and many do, we can claim to be developing our own applications for the Broadsoft platform – and we do.

Our Uboss development for example is a complete Ecosphere for managing and provisioning a hosted telephony solution from start to finish including direct integration with say murphx for connectivity, number provisioning and handset delivery from the resellers' chosen supplier.

I see several key reasons why resellers selling a hosted telephony solution should partner with a company such as ours.

The depth of functionality we can provide

is outstanding; certainly comparable or better than that of a typical CPE-based PBX including sophisticated contact centre applications

Third party applications are continually being developed and tested by a large and vibrant set of independent software vendors. The one thing Broadsoft-based suppliers are not short of is applications.

The core telephony services are fully supported by Broadsoft and we can therefore deploy solutions for customers with absolute confidence. Personally I would feel nervous about supplying a product or application not knowing the level of support I would get beyond an open source on-line community.

Businesses are not buying single application solutions they are buying bundles of services so merely trying to replicate a CPE PBX is missing the point of what hosted solutions are all about. A single focus on a single application – PBX, will not work today.

Finally, I would say to those considering which route to take for their hosted telephony sales consider what businesses are buying. Are they purchasing 1000-seat open source solutions? No, they are not. Do you see a 500-seat solution being sold? Maybe, but only in a managed service environment. Do you see an Asterisk solution winning out against a typical 150-user Avaya system? Not in my experience. So, don't underestimate the importance of the whole feature set, back up, development and reliance of a Broadsoft-based platform.