

CONSUMING CONVERGENCE

Call centres are one customer vertical that is particularly well suited to a hosted solution; they often have a large number of home workers, are geographically distributed and have peaks and troughs that require a 'bursting' capacity. A perfect cloud scenario - but that is not how it has panned out so far.

Traditionally, hosted call centre solutions have been specialist deployments that have sat outside the PBX or cloud solution. This means resellers have had either a good hosted telephony proposition or a good hosted call centre proposition but not both. VanillaIP are changing that with their latest call centre bundles as Steve Tutt, Director of Product Marketing, explains.

"The new bundles, in Basic, Standard and Premium variants, make it easy for our resellers to sit across a wide spectrum of customer requirements and present a high-end, clean and compelling solution to the customer. One danger with call centre solutions is that they can get too complex. We have many smaller, informal call centres but also some with hundreds of agents across multiple sites. It can be a challenge to get the weighting of the solution right to appeal to all customer profiles."

Comms Business Magazine (CBM): So how does this all fit in to a channel proposition and what are the features?

Steve Tutt (ST): Our bundled approach takes all the services, features and licences and massages them into agent types that the customer can relate to, regardless of the sophistication they are looking for.

Based on our latest release BroadSoft platform, the new bundles combine the ACD routing and reporting features of BroadSoft with the Unity call centre apps from Kakapo Systems and additional reporting in our Uboss portal. Kakapo

is a BroadSoft solutions partner for call centres whose apps are used by BroadSoft service providers worldwide. VanillaIP has exclusive use of the Unity apps for the UK market.

CBM: Do you foresee these bundles helping resellers win Higher Value Hosted Business?

ST: We are releasing a range of new features, some released on BroadSoft R21 and others the result of our in-house software development are only available on our BroadSoft platform.

We have all the standard options like position in queue, estimated time to answer etc. but are launching skills based routing and advanced features such as inbound and outbound DNIS. This latter services provides queue within queues and can help logically group queues for reporting purposes. For example, where you want to report on a select group of queues. For a retail travel provider they may want to report on total website queues versus total newspaper queues.

A unique feature we have is the ability to capture the incoming CLI of abandoned callers and for supervisors to assign these to agents for call back, all with click-to-dial in the Unity apps. The outgoing CLI that is presented when the agents makes the call is automatically changed to the number of the queue that the customer originally called.

Our automated thresholds for supervisor and wallboard provide audio and visual alerts when something unusual, such as a large number of calls in queue, happens. These are the smarts that can personalise the

solution not just for the customer, but for the individual supervisor and how they want to manage their teams and queues.

The ultimate attraction of hosted call centre is that it's much higher revenue per user and the customers are much stickier.

CBM: How would you characterise the convergence market today?

ST: Convergence today is about apps not networks. Value added apps for desktop and mobile are such an important differentiator for both Hosted PBX and call centre solutions. Despite widespread adoption of hosted UC services, most vendors or service providers are sticking to a narrow 'voice only' PBX feature-set.

For the industry 'Convergence' was always about combining voice on IP networks. As a transport factor, this in itself did not deliver any functional advantage for the average customer. We see convergence of the user behaviour as more important and our Unity apps are a key part of this. For example, we can now supplement a user's presence status not just with their IP phone, but with their mobile and their Outlook calendar. To us this is the concept of users now 'consuming convergence' - the convergence of applications. The IP hardphone or softphone is often little more than a voice path today, with all the smarts on the PC, Mac or mobile. These devices act as a portal to the features provided by our hosted BroadSoft system with a common user experience and features.