

Forget the jargon, Improve communications

Outsourcing communications to a third party provider can reduce the complexity of IT infrastructure in a SMB environment and help to control costs, writes Solution1 head of business development **Falk Bleyl**



Integrated telephony: Aastra Ascotel Office 60IP

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The communications market is served by an ever-increasing number of hardware and application vendors, as well as service providers, as demand grows. New services are being launched all the time and the pace of change in the communication industry is happening at breakneck speed. Add to this the fact that there is always new jargon for customers to get their heads around and the idea of addressing your IT and communication needs can seem a daunting process.

Business owners know that they need to adapt their IT and communications infrastruc-

ture as their businesses grow. They may need more bandwidth and a better internet connection that can support an increase in online activity as they start to send and receive more information. However, businesses need to be confident that they are investing in the right technology to support

their growth and maintain their competitive edge. This is usually where the first hurdle appears. Many small to medium sized business (SMB) owners do not consider themselves technology experts nor do they have access to in-house IT support. Many of the terms and phrases such as convergence, unified communications and fixed-mobile solutions, mean very little to them and they can be put off by the technical jargon.

These business owners want to know three things:

- Is it going to work properly?
- Is it going to improve the performance of the business?
- Is this solution going to save money?

Business needs

So where does a company start when they need to assess their technology and communication requirements? Arguably the most important step is to find an expert that firstly understands the business, secondly is able to cut through the hype and look at what your business really



Solution1: Falk Bleyl

Arguably the most important step is to find an expert that understands the business, is able to cut through the hype and look at what your business really needs, and explains what they recommend in layman's terms



Aastra Ascotel Office 70IP: effective telephony can improve productivity and performance

Although it sounds simple enough, selecting the right type of internet connection for a business is key. The provider should be able to discuss all these elements in a language that you understand

needs, and finally explains what they recommend in layman's terms.

Once the business has found a partner, it will need to work together to ensure that all the aspects of the business are taken into consideration. This includes looking at the company strategy and direction, as well as a number of other factors such as size, location, customer profile, current technology and telephony systems, and internal levels of technical expertise.

Affordability

When the business needs have been identified in the short, medium and long term, a technology partner will be able to make recommendations on what the business needs in

terms of infrastructure now and in the future. These technology partners should be able to guide the company through the process, advising on the technology and communication devices and services available to save money and help support the growth of the business. One of the most important considerations is a fully scalable solution that can grow with the business.

Although it sounds simple enough, selecting the right type of internet connection for a business is key. The provider should be able to discuss all these elements in a language that you understand instead of using technical jargon (ADSL/SDSL, contended/uncontended, wired/wireless). If a provider asks the right questions

about your business, it will be obvious which type of internet access is most appropriate for a user or a site.

The next step is to look at which applications are critical to the business and necessary to support staff in doing their job effectively. For example, every employee may need to access email and company files while on the move. It is possible to ensure secure access to all the company information, regardless of where it is stored – on-site at an office location or hosted at a data centre.

Hosted services

In a hosted services environment, hardware and applications are provided on the network and managed by a third party. This is a great

Spotlight on Communications



Fujitsu Siemens: streamlining communications

A hosted services environment is a cost effective way of helping to address issues around scalability, budget constraints and potential lack of in-house expertise and support

option for companies looking to outsource the responsibility and complexity of running the IT and communication infrastructure. It is also a cost-effective way of helping to address any issues around scalability, budget constraints and potential lack of in-house expertise and support.

In addition, it is vital that users have the correct devices to get the job done, including laptops, mobile phones, PDAs

and BlackBerrys. Different types of users need different devices – a desk-based person really does not need a laptop, while it is essential for a field sales person.

Businesses are highly dependent on technology and need to have the confidence that it will support the growth of their business. As a business, you do not need to have an in-depth understanding of technology, the jargon or even be up-to-

date with the latest technical advancements. As long as you have identified your needs as a business, working with the right technology partner, you will be able to ensure that you have the right hardware, services and support in place.

This will remove the complexity and reduce long-term costs helping to increase productivity, efficiency and performance.

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