

# Unified Messaging Increases Efficiency



Written by:  
John Campbell

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Several times in the past we have discussed the fast-growing usage of VoIP in communications. VoIP is an acronym for Voice over Internet Protocol which means voice traffic is channeled through a data conduit instead of a voice line. There are some distinct advantages to VoIP but there are disadvantages too and a company would be wise to rely on the services of an independent consultant before taking the plunge.

I advise companies to engage a system that has the functionality of VoIP but still utilize voice lines until they are ready to converge the voice and data lines. These systems are known as Hybrid IP systems. One of the big advantages of this technology is a feature called Unified Messaging.

This is a desktop feature whereby you receive your email, voicemail, faxes, image and video. It is compatible with most well-known programs such as Outlook, Exchange, Lotus, and so on. Picture the following scenario: you arrive at your office in the morning and turn on your PC. Your PC logs onto your LAN and its various servers. In seconds, it gives you a screen listing all your messages — voice mail, electronic mail, faxes, reports, compound documents- anything and everything that came in for you.

Each is one line just like an email telling you what it is, who it's from, how big it is, the time it was received and anything else you would see on an email message.

If it contains voice — maybe it's a voice mail or compound document with voice in it — it rings your phone (or your headset) and plays the message to you. Or, if you have a sound card in your PC, it can play the voice through your own PC.

There are few things more frustrating than getting out of a meeting and having to listen your way through ten voice messages before you get to the important call you've been waiting for. With Unified Messaging you just scroll down and see who your messages are from and deal with them in the order you prefer. You can then save your voice message in a folder with a wave file.

If it's an image, it will hunt down (also called launch) imaging software which can open the image you have received, letting you see it. The same thing happens if it is a video message.

Getting faxes through your desktop application is a big bonus. You can print them, forward them or save them in a folder. Eventually fax machines will be a rare sight in an office. Everything can be done using your All-In-One machine. We are being deluged with messages of all types. I have never seen so many emails with offers to buy stock or enhance my manly charms. We scroll down the list and deal with the ones that count and delete the ones that don't.

We can now do the same with telephone calls and faxes; a benefit that was not

previously available with your telephone system. It puts some order back into your life, increases efficiency and helps increase the bottom line. With these systems all the functionality is included. In other words there are no extra charges for features like Unified Messaging.

There is a lot more to tell you about the regarding capabilities of IP systems and we will address them in the future.

John Campbell is a Strategic-Partner with Schooley Mitchell Telecom Consultants, North America's largest independant telecom consulting company.

[john.campbell@schooleymitchell.com](mailto:john.campbell@schooleymitchell.com)

(902) 435-4578

[www.schooleymitchell.com/jcampbell](http://www.schooleymitchell.com/jcampbell)