



Consolidate Voice and Data

How can SMEs converge voice (including VoIP) and data on their networks?

The trend for convergence of all technologies on a single network is now spreading from the large corporates to SMEs. The adoption of larger capacity ADSL connections and the increased affordability of options such as SDSL, Leased Lines and the emergence of the MPLS Solutions mean that the option of convergence is now open to all.

By using these higher capacity connectivity resources, SMEs can successfully and cost effectively run data, voice and video over a single IP network. In particular MPLS solutions allow the Quality of Service option so vital when using VoIP to it's full potential.

What options are available to SMEs for such convergence?

ISPs are increasingly offering a wider variety of Internet services, including the IP connectivity that such convergence requires. Business ISPs can advise and work alongside SMEs to implement the right technology that not only does the job, but also best suits the company.

Working alongside an ISP frees the SME of the responsibility and expertise required for what can be a complicated and sophisticated solution. It is vital that the SME is comfortable and has confidence in the ISP driving the project, and that the parties involved take time to thoroughly plan the project.

What are the main drivers?

The decision to adopt full IP convergence and integration must be driven by solid and tangible business benefits. The reduced total cost of ownership, enhanced business productivity, simplification of the network and improvement in mobility and control are just some of the main reasons to make the change to a converged solution.

What's involved?

The planning process of IP convergence is the most vital step. Choosing the right partners and working through the business requirements set a strong foundation for the whole project.

Existing legacy systems need to be either integrated into the new system or replaced with compatible applications. Convergence requires careful planning, budgeting and engineering to ensure the smooth running and implementation of the new system.

Planning true IP convergence involves all aspects of the company's IT systems, overhauling and integrating their LAN, WAN, existing phone systems, and their business and web applications. It is vital that the service provider manages the whole process to ensure smooth and timely implementation and deployment.

Are there any pitfalls to avoid and what are the cost implications?

The main pitfall when looking into implementing such an involved and complex solution is ensuring that the system will deliver real business benefits to your company. Almost any company can adopt IP convergence, but not all may experience the advantages this solution can bring.

The long-term savings can be significant, but in order to maximise these, the solution must be used to its full potential. Implementation of a quality solution that carries both voice and data is a significant investment in both time and money, and therefore a business must be sure it will use all functions of the solution.

If an SME decides to adopt an IP network but does not use all of its functions, the cost of the investment will essentially be wasted and the cost savings and business benefits that such a solution can bring will not be realised.

To find out more information on how we can help your business implement and make the most of IP convergence, contact our IP Solutions Consultants on 0845 130 6010 or email Solutions@datanet.co.uk.