

Doing IT like a

WF: Jon, how successful is CommuniGate Systems in the carrier segment in particular?

JD: CommuniGate Systems have been in the carrier space for almost a decade now. In this time, Unified Communications (UC) has really become quite interesting. In the last 36 months and primarily in the last 12 months when I go to meet with network operators, I've found that most product managers are looking for solutions that they can target towards business subscribers. And Unified Communications is an excellent value-added service because of its complexity; it can provide network operator quality of service as well as the network resiliency that small businesses often can't achieve when running systems independently.

WF: Do you see any differences in penetration or acceptance level between the US and European carriers?

JD: Yes, I've seen many differences between the US and Europe during the course of many years, primarily because of the network capabilities or the bandwidth that's available to small businesses. Here in the United States it's quite difficult to get decent bandwidth—whether it's DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) or dedicated lines. For a typical small business of five people that's okay, but when you have 50 or 75 people it's quite difficult to get to the next level of connectivity. You have to jump up to what's called 45 megabits or a T3 here (in the US) which is quite expensive, whereas in Europe you can have DSL speeds between 20 to 50 megabits in just about every country that I've been to. This allows you to use Unified Communications whether you have workers who are remote, working from home, or if you just have a business that requires a lot of connectivity for voice-over IP. So the answer to your question is yes, I see the uptake (especially for hosted solutions delivered as service as a software) being much higher in western Europe than inside the US due to bandwidth restraints here.

WF: Unified Communications is a relatively broad solution that could be very interesting in the future; so if we discuss now the offerings of CommuniGate Systems in this area, where are the carrier solutions actually hosted? At CommuniGate's premises or at the carriers' premises?

JD: We don't have an operations or a data center that we lease or sell to others—our only data center is our own servers that we use internally. Typically, what we do is provide the software to bring in system integrators. Then a network operator will bring in storage or routers that complete the solution. But the software as a service is typically done by the network operator, using our software and branding it under their name.

WF: Okay, I see. Let's talk now about the CommuniGate Pro solution. As a carrier solution, does it come with web-conferencing functions for subscribers and end users?

JD: Audio and video conferencing will be a feature in an upcoming release. All of our technology is delivered to what's called Web 2.0 or Rich Internet Application (we have a client framework called Pronto!), it's done in Flash so this allows delivery of just about every communication media type from email to IM to audio, even VideoMail. VideoMail today is more of a consumer than business subscriber play, but literally any kind of application can be deployed through Web 2.0 technology. That's quite important for network operators because if they're hosting many companies, installing software on PCs—or even Apple laptops—can be quite a time-consuming task. So operators are looking to deliver their solution as a web application. In this respect, we think we've done a great job with Flash; it allows connectivity to any kind of PC that has Flash capabilities (which I think is 99% of the market) so it doesn't matter if it's a Linux, laptop, Apple, or a Windows PC, customers can get the same experience using our technology through the web.

WF: If we look at large enterprise customers, they very often have the capacity to integrate business applications such as contact center and enterprise resource planning, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), etcetera. It's quite a different case if you compare that to consumer requirements, so how does CommuniGate make it possible to integrate different applications into your platform or within your platform?

JD: One of the big distinctions between our technology and, let's say, an enterprise-class technology like Lotus Notes, is that we have a huge amount of APIs (Application Programming Interface). Every time that we deploy CommuniGate Pro into a network operator's data center, it has to integrate not only with other business applications but build and provision numerous other systems it normally wouldn't expect to find.

CommuniGate Pro is designed very much to be the glue in between various applications as well as being able to extend itself when necessary to adapt to something that somebody may have created independently. Often, network operators build their own provisioning system and since it's not something you buy in the open market, we have to adapt very easily to those technologies and alter our API set accordingly.

WF: Generally, how much effort does it take for an enterprise to connect and access an SAP application and connect/integrate this with another solution?

JD: It depends on the application itself; if it has APIs, typically we'll find one of the most common ways to connect to other solutions is through simple mail transfer protocol being able to transmit messages back and forth between a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) or an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system, or into the directory services. During the past decade it's become quite common to have a centralized directory ➤

Pro

Audio and video conferencing will be a feature in an upcoming release of the CommuniGate Pro solution. **WOLFRAM FUNK**, SENIOR ADVISOR AT EXPERTON GROUP talks to **JON DOYLE**, VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT COMMUNIGATE SYSTEMS about the potential of this Unified Communications solution.



inside the enterprise—whether it's LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol)-based or an active directory where all applications tie in. So I don't think it's a huge effort but it really depends upon how open the other platform is. If there are APIs available that are common standard space that we can tie into, it's just a matter of engineering applications that can communicate back and forwards.

WF: CommuniGate Systems view software as a service (SaaS) as a potential future offering. How will you develop that in the enterprise space? And presently, how great is the demand for UC and software as a service in the enterprise segment?

JD: I usually speak with product managers, product marketing people, and network operators regularly, and I will tell you that in the last six months I've seen more than a dozen RFPs (Request for Proposal) coming out for UC (Unified Communications) in the software and the service model. So I would say that the acceptance level and demand is quite high. What we're going to be doing soon is making our technology more tailored for business subscribers in developing applications that help business processes. If you look at the medical or transportation industry, there are specific things that people do in their daily lives that we will be tailoring our software around. For example, in doctors' offices, staff make a lot of appointments, and they also feed information to insurance companies through different systems, so we will be making certain enhancements to our software that allow network operators to target specific industry segments that are interesting for them.

WF: But what about a scenario where an enterprise wants to use SaaS but has also requirements on integration of business applications; how do you resolve that?

JD: Well again, typically what we would do is work with a system integrator that has knowledge of that technology. For example, if they were integrating into, for instance, an Oracle application, we don't have that core competency inside our company so we would look to Oracle itself for its professional services or a system integrator to help us tap into that technology effectively.

WF: Could you name a few customers in the US or in Europe that already use UC software as a service?

JD: Sure. In Russia we have Central Telecom which is deploying our solution in the UC model, British Telecom has been working with us over the last six months developing a whole suite of applications for the client side for the UC software service model, and we're working with big operators inside Germany, both cable as well as wire line.

WF: What are the main business cases?

JD: Usually a combination of messaging and telephony. Often you'll see many vendors selling IP PBXs saying it's a UC solution, but what makes Unified Communications so called is when you have messaging and telephony 'glued' together typically with a presence engine, meaning when I'm on the phone or I'm busy, I can mark my presence and that sends signals to both sets of servers. For example, phone calls are coming into me right now while I'm on this podcast, but because my calendar is marked as 'busy,' the telephony doesn't ring my phone, it just sends the call right through to voicemail. This combination of mechanisms is typically what we're seeing in the marketplace.

WF: I think UC is much easier to manage if it's centrally delivered through software as a service. Do CommuniGate have installed lines?

JD: No, we don't. British Airways, for instance, is running its own servers and data center but it's acting like an ISP (Internet Service Provider). The company has many employees but they're all completely mobile—you don't know where they're going to log in or what network they're going to come in from. So UC is quite different from an enterprise solution where you control everything through VPNs (Virtual Private Network) and networks.

In our model you're allowing people to access from anywhere through web clients.

WF: What about security issues?

JD: Consideration of security issues was one of the reasons we chose Adobe Flash to make our rich Internet application, which we call Pronto!. There are many technologies in the market today that use AJAX technology, and I think the statistic is somewhere around 90% of all Trojans and viruses coming into your PC or Mac are through browsers with Java script. So we recognized early on the security threats of delivering things through the web and viewed the Flash technologies as being much more secure.

WF: Finally, from your personal experience at CommuniGate Systems, which best practices would you recommend to carriers or enterprises that want to set up UC projects?

JD: I'll have to split my answer as there are little differences between the two customers. Carriers obviously have to have technology that's going to efficiently scale high density. They need to be able to virtualize things like PBX services, messaging and all the other components of the UC technology and that's what CommuniGate Pro is precisely tailored for; it is able to virtualize thousands of businesses inside one clustered platform.

Enterprises on the other hand need to have a system that is essentially simple and reliable. One of the biggest challenges for small and medium companies is the complexity of technology. So ultimately, with regard to software as a service, I would advise peers to 'know your customer and customise a package not only to address and meet customers' needs, but one that can be realistically and appropriately utilized.' **ETM**



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Jon Doyle has a long history working with mobile and broadband providers in the Internet Communications segment. As Vice President of Business Development at CommuniGate Systems, he currently focuses on developing strategic partnerships and expanding office locations worldwide. Prior to joining CommuniGate Systems, Jon was Director of Strategic Alliances at Sendmail, where he managed product development and marketing programs with strategic partners including HP and Intel.