

# Solutions

## IP Telephony: How Can It Benefit You?

IP Telephony systems offer significant cost and performance advantages over maintaining separate voice, video, and data networks. The cost of a converged network can run 40-60 percent less than the total cost of ownership (TCO) of separate voice, video, and data networks. Managing a single, unified network is generally easier, less expensive, and requires fewer resources.

In addition to reducing calling charges, IPT eliminates redundant PBX expenses, including hardware, software, maintenance, servicing, and technician costs, by replacing the PBX system altogether. Because you're dealing with a single network rather than three, management and administration costs are reduced as well.

IP Telephony supports applications and devices that allow your employees to work more efficiently and productively. These applications and devices include:

**IP SoftPhone** – A software-based appliance that enables "power phone users" to completely integrate their telephone functionality into their desktop or laptop PC. A high-resolution LED screen can be programmed to display information of key value to the user.

**Unified Messaging** – Users can access and manage all their messages at any time, from anywhere, using whichever tool is most convenient (phone, PDA, desktop PC, or the Internet).

**IP Videoconferencing** – Allows employees at different sites to communicate more effectively. By reducing the need for face-to-face meetings, videoconferencing can also lower business travel expenses.

IPT solutions are also more flexible and scalable than traditional communication systems. Adding new sites or users can be done much more quickly with fewer resources. For example, enabling voice and video for the planned addition of a new building or the emergency addition of a remote office can be done with almost no incremental effort or cost above installing the LAN/WAN infrastructure.

**IP Telephony** - *Continued on Page 3*

## Fax From Your Desktop!

The fax machine is an ever present piece of office hardware and has grown in popularity over the years. It has evolved to include scanning and copying functions as well as network based printing. In the quest to reduce equipment costs while maintaining office productivity and efficiency, many businesses have consolidated their faxing services into single, 'multifunction' devices which can be shared by the whole office. This can become a problem as staff members go to the fax machine location frequently throughout the day to send out, and check for new faxes.

To decrease the trips to the fax machine, keep productivity high, reduce paper usage, and avoid "lost" faxes, many businesses are leveraging their existing network infrastructure and moving to a new concept in faxing known as 'server based faxing'. This concept allows a business to run a fax 'service' on a server connected to the network which has one or more fax modems attached to it. The server is responsible for sending and/or receiving faxes, and in some cases, distributing the incoming ones to the appropriate end user(s). Advantages of this scenario include: less paper usage, quicker response to received faxes, and higher employee productivity, to name a few.

If you already own a modern Microsoft Windows server, and utilize Windows XP operating systems for your PCs, then you have most of what is needed for implementation. The software is included with the XP operating system. The only other thing needed is a modem (or modems if you want to use more than one fax line) in the server, for answering and sending faxes. Once this is set up, everyone in the office has the ability to send a fax from their desktop as well as attach documents to them.

Receiving faxes and routing them to the appropriate person is trickier. In order to know where to route the faxes, the server has to determine which line it was received on, and then apply rules based on this to forward the fax to a person, e-mail, or folder on the server. A company can set up several different fax numbers and route the faxes coming to each number to different groups or departments.

**Faxing** - *Continued on Page 2*

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## Passwords: How Secure Are Yours?

In today's technology driven world, the use of passwords has become one of the most common ways to secure information. From online banking to accessing your company network remotely, passwords are usually required to access this secure information. Keep in mind some of the following tips when establishing or updating your passwords to help keep your information safe.

The first type of password, a *simple* password, is between three and eight characters long and consists of letters of the alphabet. One example of this type of password is: **grumpy**. When using a simple password a user can go the extra mile for security and capitalize one or many characters in the word. Most modern software and Internet applications that use passwords are also case sensitive which means if the password entered doesn't match the case used, the user is denied access. For example, the password of **grumpy** could be made more secure by switching between upper and lower case letters as follows: **GrUmpY**. This is a simple, yet very effective way to make a simple password harder to crack.

The second type of password, a *strong* password, is more complex in its character makeup. It is generally made up of five to eight characters, but also uses numerals and symbols in its construction. The additional use of non-alphabetical characters such as symbols and numbers make the password have a much more infinite possibility. An example of this type of password would be: **grumpy@123**. Also, just like its counterpart, you can further strengthen a *strong* password by using upper and lower case, or **GrUmpY@123**.

The final component involves keeping a password safe from discovery. The most common mistake is using the same password for everything. This is a convenient way to avoid juggling multiple passwords, but can be dangerous. When a password is compromised, it's usually attached to something that can be abused or exploited. Another mistake is not occasionally changing passwords. Simply changing the case of a letter or adding a character makes a big difference. Many people use information like pet, family names or significant dates, but take into consideration that others may know these items as well. Therefore, choose something personal and then build upon it. ☺

*For more information contact Rex Gleeson at ext 222*

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## Fall 2006 Timeslips User Group

Join us on October 19th in the Academy Room in the City County Building for complimentary lunch and refreshments. The discussion will include the new features in Timeslips 2007 such as the New Appearance and Navigators, Receiving Slips by Email, TAL Pro for QuickBooks changes, Slip Approval Process, Enhanced Selection Filters and more! Space is limited. Please RSVP to Danielle at 412-261-5600 ext. 210 by October 13<sup>th</sup>. ☺

## Faxing - Continued from Page 1

Sometimes there is a single location for all incoming faxes, which then get manually distributed by a designated person. This is still efficient as the junk faxes can be deleted without printing, which wastes ink and paper. The legitimate faxes can be sent via e-mail to the correct people or stored in appropriate locations within the network.

There are other commercial software and hardware products besides Microsoft's solutions which can route and send faxes. Many of these are expensive and may require specialized software and/or hardware to work. Additionally, special software to view the incoming faxes or send outgoing faxes is sometimes required.

Each of these solutions has advantages and disadvantages which need to be taken into consideration when determining if a fax server would be beneficial to your organization. ☺

*For more information contact Jeff Smereczniak at ext 214*

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## SonicWALL – Providing More Than Just Content Filtering

As discussed in the most recent edition of 'Solutions' in the 'WALL of Protection' article, it is clear that SonicWALL ISAs are a dependable solution for network security. Discussed below are two yearly subscriptions that add features to SonicWALL's already high-level of security.

SonicWALL offers a Content Filtering Service using a cached URL rating system. This database contains millions of URLs, IP addresses and domains that block improper content and automatically downloaded files, while allowing instantaneous access to permissible sites. The Web-Based Management allows administrators transparency and control over internet usage via policy configuration. This includes custom group policies with Premium service.

The Gateway AntiVirus, AntiSpyware and Intrusion Prevention service prevents network infections by blocking spyware installation at the gateway. This disrupts communications from existing spyware, real-time virus scanning and a per-packet scanning engine that can handle unlimited file sizes and thousands of concurrent downloads. Similar to the CFS, this service uses an extensive database of attack and vulnerability signatures that detect and prevent intrusions, enforceable by the administrator on both external and internal traffic.

Let Plummer Slade demonstrate how SonicWALL ISA bundled with these great services can greatly reduce Internet threats that effect your network and assist in keeping you more secure. ☺

*For more information contact Dave Roberts at ext 225*

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## IP Telephony – Continued from Page 1

To survive and thrive in today's competitive business environment, businesses need their IP infrastructures to support scalability, flexibility, management of a growing distributed organization, and access to new business applications. After the initial investment of a Cisco access router has been made, it makes sense to converge voice applications with the existing data hardware for a complete Cisco IP Communications solution.

Converging separate data and voice networks into one IP infrastructure simplifies network operations and builds additional value into the network by adding new applications for a competitive advantage. Also, when separate support and administrative staff can combine to eliminate redundancy, companies can direct their assets toward strategic core business investments. ☺

*For more information contact Joe Lilley at ext 205*

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## Announcing Time Matters 8.0!

LexisNexis has announced the release of Time Matter 8.0! As with most new versions of software, there are new features and capabilities, as well as improvements and additions, which are described below:

- TM Save & TM Open functions available in Adobe Acrobat Reader
- TMConnect automatically saves attachments as documents
- You can set the order of the Regarding fields to suit your needs. Having the Matter/Case Reference field first can save time.
- Default the Name/Org button on Contact form
- Create PDF files from Document list
- TM Email allows change of subject on sent or received emails
- AUTO.TXT in description & memo fields
- Program Level default Class Code memos as record descriptions
- Launcher fields support Ampersand Notation
- Improved Powerview that show Related Records
- Document form includes a button to open the folder containing the file.
- New process options have been added to the Recycle Bin
- Lock out users during database maintenance
- Windows Mobile 5 synchronization support
- Set a default location for your backup file

It's recommended not to let software applications get more than 2 versions behind the most current. This reduces the learning curve with each upgrade and ensures you are using a version that is supported by the manufacturer. Contact Plummer Slade for a free demonstration of Time Matters 8.0 or with any questions about the new features. ☺

*For more information contact Leslie Hennessy at ext 228*

## Tips to Make Your Software Upgrades Go Smoothly

When a new version of software is released, new features and improvements often make these applications robust and may require additional system resources to maintain optimal performance. The following guide will help you understand what steps should be taken prior to upgrading software applications.

**Stay Current** - It has never been more important to stay ahead of the game and keep your software current. It's a good habit to not allow your software to be more than 2 versions behind the most current. This helps keep your staff from experiencing long learning curves with each upgrade. It also reduces the chances of data loss or corruption during database conversions. For example, if you are running Timeslips 2004 we recommend upgrading to Timeslips 2007 since you are now more than 2 versions behind the most recent release. You always want to use software that retains the support of the software manufacturer.

**System Requirements** - Prior to upgrading, check with the software manufacturer for the system requirements needed to run the new version. Once this has been determined, verify that your Operating System, processor speed, and amount of RAM meet the specifications. You also need to confirm that both your server and your local hard drive have enough available free space to run the application and store the data. Some software applications have requirements for the resolution settings for your monitor which are sometimes overlooked. This can impact the ease of use for the software dramatically.

### Minimum Requirements vs. Vendor Recommendations

Most software manufacturers will provide Minimum System Requirements and Recommended System Requirements. The Minimum System Requirements are the bare minimum required for the software to function. Recommended System Requirements, which are identified by people working in the field and based on their experience, allow the application to function in the best possible environment and in a satisfactory manner. For example, according to the system requirements for Time Matters Professional Version 8.0; you can adequately run the program with only 256 MB of RAM, but they recommend having at least 512 MB of RAM for optimal performance. You should always follow the vendor's "recommendations" to get the most out of your upgrade and protect your important data.

Also, keep in mind that some software vendors offer a discount when a software upgrade is first announced. This discount is usually valid on purchases made within the first few weeks/months of the initial release or for preorders. ☺

*For more information contact Lenny Jones at ext 211*

**PLUMMER SLADE, INC.**  
2450 LAWYERS BUILDING  
428 FORBES AVENUE  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15219

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PGH PA  
PERMIT NO  
5250

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<b>INSIDE THIS ISSUE</b>	
IP Telephony: How Can It Benefit You? .....	1
Fax From Your Desktop .....	1
Passwords: How Secure Are Yours? .....	2
Announcing Time Matters 8.0.....	2
Timeslips Users Group Meeting.....	2
Tips to Make Software Upgrades Go Smooth.....	2
SonicWALL: More Than Just Content Filtering.....	3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Did you know that Plummer Slade supports a variety of software applications including Microsoft Office, Timeslips, Time Matters, Billing Matters, ACT!, Quickbooks, Peachtree, Worldox and DisplaySoft to name a few. Please contact us to find out about the training that is available for each of these software applications.</li><li>• Timeslips 2004 is no longer supported by Sage software. Please contact Plummer Slade if you still need to upgrade your Timeslips software.</li></ul> |