



## Is Their Unified Communications Really Unified?

by Richard  
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**To be effective, unified communications must encompass many functions and capabilities, or "sub-applications", such as presence, telephony and voice conferencing, instant messaging, video and videoconferencing, web conferencing, email, voicemail, Short Message Services (SMS) and mobility, most of which must operate in real-time and via a common interface, or at least a limited number of interfaces.**

Traditionally, most companies use separate servers and link them by protocols or APIs to provide each of these capabilities. For example, Microsoft would like you to use both their own and some partners' portfolio of technology for UC. In the Microsoft paradigm you must install several server products, starting with a few Windows Servers. Then you will need Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, Active Directory server, OCS 2007, and MS SQL Server at the back end. You need licenses of MS Office itself so you can have Outlook and Office Communicator. Plus, if that were not enough already, you will want a web server for web access to Outlook — Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS). So you need to buy licenses for at least seven products.

"It comes out to around \$500 per user," says Jon Doyle, Vice President of Business Development at CommuniGate Systems ([www.communiGate.com](http://www.communiGate.com)). "As if that were not enough, you will also need to consider the cost of your PBX and IP

phone. Many companies ask, 'Wait — in all this you mean to say there is not even a PBX and you have to buy that from Nortel?' If you want the full features of the VoIP components then yes, you must buy products from their partner, Nortel, as well as the IP phones, which adds probably another \$400 per user at minimum. The worst part of this entire 'package' is that Microsoft left out the most important feature, reliability. Everyone knows the monthly downtimes of Exchange server alone are enough to impact corporate workflows on an ever-growing basis. So it is mind-boggling to imagine what the risks would be of turning over the most reliable part of your business, the phone, to a hodgepodge of barley-out-of-beta Microsoft servers."

"Perhaps large Enterprises can afford more outlandish expenses for per-seat installations," says Doyle, "but for SMBs such as law firms or doctors' offices of around 20 or 30 people, you don't want to install a large number of server products in your phone closet to achieve the benefits of UC. Indeed, for a

small company, it's preposterous to have seven or eight servers running at all."

Doyle's company, CommuniGate Systems, offers CommuniGate Pro, a highly scalable multi-tenant UC server that tightly integrates and truly unifies unified communications and rich media capabilities into an all-in-one package. The server can be used in a small office, or it can be used by ISPs to host thousands of SMBs virtually, all within one system image. A remarkable number of function modules are included, from IP PBX/Voice-over-IP, email, calendaring, collaboration, presence, instant messaging, voicemail, conferencing and mobility. CommuniGate Pro is customizable via a complete development environment, and presents you to the world at a single public address. It can even run on Apple OSX, and it turns the new iPhone 3G into a mobile office, eliminating the need to buy IP phones! Best of all, it's all about Web 2.0; you can administer it from a web browser and you can "use the Flash client Pronto!" from a web browser.

"In comparison with competing systems that cost hundreds of dollars per user," says Doyle, "CommuniGate Pro's do-everything abilities costs under \$50, which makes it a very sensible choice for a Small to Medium-sized Business [SMB] whether they install the product on site or subscribe to it as a SaaS from one of our ISP partners. Moreover, we did remember to make the technology reliable — in fact, it is nearly bullet proof."



“For ISPs wanting to provide UC in the SaaS model, CommuniGate Pro is ultra-efficient,” says Doyle. “We have tested the density compared to MS servers and can achieve 25x more throughput, and domains [hosted companies] using AirSync and heavy SIP traffic. Our technology is designed perfectly for large scale SaaS deployments with our Dynamic Cluster feature. All servers combine to become a single system image, with virtual domains having their own policies, features, administration and users. We have field-proven examples of carriers running CommuniGate Pro UC SaaS with over 150,000 domains [individual companies] on a single cluster.”

CommuniGate Pro’s super-comprehensive yet inexpensive unified communications and rich multimedia talents have enabled it to take on larger UC/groupware players such as Microsoft, Cisco, IBM and Novell. Each of these companies has its own somewhat confusing approach to telephony, partnership, UC functionality and interoperability. For example, Microsoft obviously requires operations on Windows Servers, but IBM Sametime can run on various operating systems, including Windows. Sametime doesn’t support NAT and firewall traversal for IP voice and video, but Microsoft’s OCS does, and can securely run voice and video packets over the Internet. OCS doesn’t integrate with Lotus Notes, but Sametime can integrate with Lotus Notes. Microsoft Exchange does not fully support Mac Office and typically has “extensions” to open standards like SIP making it nearly impossible to integrate it into other technologies.

“Ironically, CommuniGate Systems is itself is a Microsoft developer — we create products that can run under Windows,” says Doyle, “so we have experience installing all of their servers. I remember when we installed all of these — it took a few days of effort. Where Microsoft is very successful is when they deal with organizations larger than a ‘small’ business. A larger enterprise can afford to install and fiddle with all of these products; in fact, managing servers and software keeps big IT departments busy and justifies their jobs. But small guys can’t afford to have staff to do any of that. With CommuniGate Pro, however, you’re working with a single unified communications server administration screen.”

“Then there’s the matter of downtime,” says Doyle. “The Radicati Group’s homepage [www.radicati.com] reveals that Microsoft Exchange (including all versions) users experience an average of 1.6 hours of unplanned downtime per month, and 2.4 hours of average planned downtime per month. So, if you’ve got that much downtime

involving just email — which is mission-critical — imagine both your phone system and your email system being down for several hours a month. Isn’t the ‘dial tone quality’ important to your business? Which Service Pak will ensure even near dial-tone quality? Before authorizing the install of such a configuration, any competent executive would immediately ask their IT person some embarrassing questions: ‘Has our existing phone system ever gone down at all — except perhaps once a year for upgrades or maintenance? Why would we be considering adopting something that has several hours of planned and unplanned downtime per month?’”

“At this point I should mention that CommuniGate Pro has demonstrated ‘five nines’ of uptime, or less than 5 minutes of downtime per year!,” beams Doyle. “It’s a bulletproof application. It’s written in C++ and is a fully multithreaded platform. CommuniGate Pro is a genuine carrier-grade piece of software with carrier-grade reliability, meaning ‘dial-tone quality.’”

“Additionally, CommuniGate Pro runs on just about every operating system you can think of,” says Doyle, “including Windows, Solaris, Linux, BSD and OSX. Its Apple OSX capability is particularly interesting, because there’s a big trend happening right now of businesses moving toward Apple products. Of every 10 laptops sold in the U.S., three are from Apple, which is incredible. Now, the iPhone 3G will soon take over the lead from Blackberry for business subscribers. There’s definitely a perception of Apple products being more stable, better quality, and having better security.”

Doyle is correct. The market research firm NPD reports that Apple achieved 14 percent of the U.S. retail PC market share in February 2008, up from 9 percent a year ago, representing 60 percent unit growth and 67 percent revenue growth year-over-year. Mac Notebook sales were up 64 percent year-over-year and Mac Desktops were up 55 percent year-over-year. Mac Desktop systems grew 55 percent on a 68 percent increase in revenues. Furthermore, The Yankee Group reports that 87 percent of businesses have some Apple computers in their offices, up from 48 percent two years ago.

For Apple Mac users (or any other kind of user), CommiGate Pro is a reliable and powerful unified communications technology you should try out after pondering “where do you want to go today”. **UC**

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