New Apps Bolster Cisco VOIP System for SMBs

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IPcelerate will bolster Cisco's new UC 500 small-business IP telephony system when it launches four VOIP application packages aimed at specific small vertical businesses.

The new IPsmartSuite packages are designed to streamline business processes for small retail shops, physician offices, law firms and small manufacturing offices with between five and 50 users.

The packages are built on IPcelerate's existing NIPA (Network IP Applications) framework, used for IP telephony applications aimed at larger enterprises. While small businesses have the same requirements as larger enterprises, they don't have the IT staff available to deploy and maintain systems supporting the same capabilities, according to Kevin Brown, CEO of the Dallas-based firm.

The IPsmartSuite packages require little configuration for deployment and can integrate themselves with Cisco's Smart Business Communications System. "They are plug-and-play out of box. These customers can just start entering their own data to make these applications work," Brown said.

For law firms, the IPsmartSuite combines IP telephony with functions such as client billing, interaction with clients, automated scheduling alerts, and recording and archiving to streamline business processes related to a law firm's activities.

"The No. 1 requirement for a law firm is accurate billing. You want to tie all activities to billable hours. An application integrated into the phone allows users to enter a client code that associates with billing," Brown said. The application can catch user mistakes by associating a client matter code entered by a user with the specific customer and displaying that on the IP handset, he said.

The physicians clinic IPsmartSuite automates patient sign-in, patient status alerts and messaging on waiting room phones; automates dial-out for appointment reminders; provides video collaboration between physicians; and performs 911 notifications for emergencies.

The IPsmartSuite package for retail stores automates staffing management functions, provides productivity management, and allows for internal and external 911 alerts. The small manufacturing office version also supports automated staffing management, performs dial-out to customers and suppliers, records calls, and provides 911 notifications.

IPcelerate, which markets IPsession and IPStudio to larger enterprises, intends to leverage its NIPA framework to develop vertical applications for other small businesses such as small bank branch offices, insurance company branch offices and local governments.

IPcelerate made the new IPsmartSuite packages easy for channel partners to distribute by creating a single SKU for the suite. "They just answer a question: 'Is this a retail customer, or health care customer,' and the application pulls the appropriate code for them. We're trying to simplify this for the VAR," said Brown.

IPsmartSuite is available now.

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