

SpliceCom Freedom from constraint

John Chapman takes a look at the future of IP telephony



The SplicePhone – the real star of the show as far as the user is concerned

Imagine an IT manufacturer designing an IP Telephony system without having to worry about old-world corporate telephony culture or the need to protect a client's investment in old proprietary TDM architectures.

This is the opportunity that Sean Harding, along with former directors and senior managers at Network Alchemy and SDX, had when they founded the company SpliceCom to develop an IP Telephony solution for SMEs.

“We learnt a great deal developing and marketing the Argent series of telephony products at Network Alchemy and later within Avaya,” said SpliceCom's CEO, Sean Harding. “However it is now four and a half years since the launch of Argent Office and the market has moved on considerably. The entry level SME space is now well catered for by our original systems and competitive offerings from most of the major voice manufacturers. Cisco currently have the high-end enterprise market to themselves. However, there has always been a strong demand for similar products in the high-end SME/low-end Enterprise market, which remains unfulfilled.

“We therefore decided to step up the pace and develop the next generation of IP Telephony product to address this gap in the market, based on our experiences, utilising the technology now available and without the constraints that often inhibit the traditional voice vendor.”

Sean and his team have developed a standards-based IP Telephony system based around the SpliceSwitch architecture which can scale from eight to 5000 users. It can be deployed in multiple business scenarios and uses the intelligence of today's network architectures to deliver voice and any associated telephony application to wherever the user is based.

The simplicity of the SpliceSwitch architecture means that there are four basic building blocks from which any

solution is configured. These four modules can be deployed anywhere around the organisation's network in whatever combination is needed to meet the exact requirements of the client. The modules are connected to each other across the network and use it as their intelligent “backplane” to communicate with one another.

The Admin 4100 Module is the main system unit, which contains the PBX software, router, H.323 gatekeeper and gateway, powered 10/100 Mbps switch, and the PRI, Quad BRI, X21 and DSL/LAN trunks. In fact, the 4100 is a complete IP telephony system including a built-in hard-disk drive, which holds the LDAP-based System Database of users and the voice-mail and auto-attendant functions.

For the SME market, up to 300 users, the Admin 4100 Module on its own can provide all the functionality needed in a pure IP Telephony environment. But the real strength of this module is that for larger clients or to build in resilience, flexibility and backup, multiple units can be deployed across both the local and wide area network to support up to 5000 users in any configuration you desire.

The second major unit in the SpliceSwitch architecture is the Trunk 4200 Module, which provides the same network and trunking connections as the Admin 4100 Module, including all the trigger and alarm connections. This module works in conjunction with the Admin 4100 Module to provide the additional connectivity and can be deployed anywhere across the local or wide area network.

The final two units, the Phone 4315 and 4330 Modules, enable either 15 or 30 standard analogue phones to connect into the SpliceSwitch architecture. Multiples of these units can be deployed anywhere across the local or wide area network to build the best solution for the client. These modules are H.323 compliant and provide caller display information to the handsets.

Being H.323 compliant means that “off-the-shelf” IP Phones and soft phones will work with the SpliceCom system. However, it is SpliceCom's own IP Phone, the SplicePhone, which is the real star of the show as far as the user is concerned. It is like no other IP Phone on the market today. It has no physical keypad or buttons, it uses a touch screen display where the buttons are displayed when the handset is picked up. This display also provides caller information, directory information and Web-based information and interactive Web applications.

The system will be available in small quantities from August with full customer availability from around October. SpliceCom have decided to ignore the traditional direct sales model of the voice world and the typical two-step distributor/reseller model of the data world and have opted for an indirect sales model working directly with the reseller channel.