

All in a day's work

Improving efficiency is a priority in commercial operations and new technologies are key to making this happen.

Marek Lewandowski, the CEO of SalesManager Software, illustrates an example of how VoIP and differentiated services can be built into both next generation networks and existing services to make a working day highly effective



Effective communication skills are a crucial part of every successful business person's armoury. The fast-moving, interconnected nature of the modern business landscape demands that those in commerce be in constant touch with market information and emerging trends. Let's take a look at a hypothetical case, following the daily routine of an invented but typical candidate who could benefit from state-of-the-art communications strategies, to try and understand these demands and just how they can best be met.

A day in the life of Mr. John Smith
Mr. John Smith is a marketing manager for the XYZ Corporation and

his daily business routine is organised specifically with a view to maximising efficiency. From preliminary observations we notice that he is able to do most things quicker and more effectively than most other managers in his position. He responds efficiently to e-mails and inquiries, prepares reports on time, meets with top management for briefings, and still has time for planning, market analysis and discussions with his clients. How does he do this?

John Smith enters the office at 8:30AM like everyone else. His office is on the fifth floor of the sizeable corporate building, which houses different departments on each floor.

In his position he interfaces with most of those departments on a daily basis to coordinate the planning, budgeting, production, auditing, transport and delivery of products. His PDA mobile phone picks up the wireless network of his company while his video PDA Instant Messenger (IM) logs in to the SIP server of the VoIP telecom that serves the XYZ Company. John is now able to receive mobile calls from the outside world as well as phone calls direct to his office corporate extension. The call follows him around the office, ensuring that he never misses anyone trying to contact him. Furthermore, he is now able to communicate on his mobile with millions of people

at no extra cost. The IM presence indicator shows when his boss is available to talk, while similarly the PDA Messenger delivers status updates on each system user. "This is a great feature," he thinks. "I'm not interrupting my boss when he is busy and he is not doing it to me." His boss has instructed him that he has received information from several top corporate clients that indicates the company's sales personnel lack knowledge on the new features of several top-end products. "They have to be trained on this immediately!" he concludes.

By now it is 8:50AM. When talking to his boss John was making his morning coffee and so by now is ready to work. He has logged on to corporate LAN on his laptop and opened his web corporate mail system. He reviews the incoming mail. As always spam messages have been filtered out and he has received several video, audio and old fashioned e-mails from co-workers, as well as a number of video reports from branch offices. "Thank God for video-mail," he thinks. "If I had to type the replies and check the style and grammar of all those messages then it would take me hours, much like it did before. No more wasting time!"

He replies quickly to several e-mail messages by recording audio or video messages, adding pre-recorded video

top-end products. This means they can be saved on salespeople's hard disks for easy future off-line access, or for them to be sent to clients. However, he does not send video files as attachments as they would be too large, instead they are stored on the service provider's servers. In addition, John uses the web page template for video e-mails as it incorporates links to the manufacturer's technical specifications. In his morning

and received the SMS messages on their mobiles. "The others will just have to be passive participants in the video conference," he says to his assistant Ann. "Could you send them the records of the conference and begin the conference?"

Ann goes back to her desk and logs in to the video-conference module on her XYZ corporate IM. A total of 288 members of the sales force are logged in as 'available', while 12 are 'busy'. Inviting the availables to the virtual meeting room is no problem, and within minutes 211 people are logged in as listeners. "Either the rest of the participants join in later or I will have to send them a video recording of the conference from the video mail module of the IM," says Ann.

Ann is the host of the conference. She decides who the presenter or speaker is, who views the event, and who among the listeners can pose questions electronically. She welcomes the participants and gives presenter status to John. He discusses the current problems, opens a whiteboard module, loads the PowerPoint presentation and, using markers, starts to explain the technical issues with the top-end products. Some

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files and photos to the content of the video message. When he has finished he just presses the send button. The system has placed the messages on the vi-mail server for storage. Some of those messages will be removed after 'addressees' reviews them so that they cannot be resent to unauthorised people, while the system also allows the storing of video training film for

welcome video message that he has sent to the group of 300 salespeople worldwide for which he is responsible, he requests that they log-in at 10:00AM for the video conference training.

John reports back to his desk at 9.50AM to review the sent message statistics. As the mail subject was marked 'important' no less than 256 people viewed the training invitation




people have typed questions, while some have asked Ann for speaker status so that their questions over product quality can be seen live by participants. However, John is not able to provide complete reassurance so decides to call the manufacturer's customer service department for answers. Making a phone call to the manufacturer from his Messenger softphone module is easy. When a representative answers Ann adds him to the conference 'live' and gives him speaker status, which solves the technical and quality problems. The videoconference ends an hour later, just in time for lunch. John lunches with his employees. While he uses the internet extensively for work-related communications, he enjoys every moment he shares with his co-workers in real life.

Meanwhile Ann has been sending video-mails to the videoconference absentees. They will view the conference replay later. Some of the video-mails will be received on individual employees' mobile phones.

After lunch it's time to contact clients. John does prospecting by sending video-mail offers to potential clients while he also makes phone calls to existing enterprise customers using his Messenger SIP protocol-based softphone module. He uses the video conference module with its Outlook contacts and utilises the company's CRM database. After a few short video-web conferences with a couple of his clients and some of John's salespeople from various branches he moves on to liaise with senior management. At about 3:30PM John contacts his CEO to brief him on yesterday's corporate sales results. He uses the web videoconference module on a computer in the accounting office as at the time he is unable to be at his desk and use his notebook. This is a process made even more efficient by the fact that he does not even need to prepare the report. He shares sales data in real time with the CEO using the web conference application sharing function. The CEO records the briefing and all the data at the click of a button and stores the results in his database.

The work day is almost over. John is happy to leave work and picks up his kids from the kindergarten. He was monitoring their play on the web and even talked to them earlier in the day. Now it's time to see them live. He missed them a lot. At 4:30PM he leaves his office. His mobile phone disconnects itself from the Wi-Fi mode and enters GSM/3G mode. Later on his wife calls. However, he cannot pick up the phone as he is driving into his garage. Moments later he calls her. She is in the USA on medical training as she is soon to become a doctor. This is a private call so John uses the VoIP call-back software in his mobile phone which is ideal for international calls. He dials as normal and there is a completely transparent call-back. The phone behaves as if it is making a regular connection, John only has to wait for an extra two seconds or so. His wife picks up the phone and they talk for a while. The cost of the call is low, much like a regular VoIP call.

After picking up the kids he drives straight home. His mobile phone picks up his home wireless network and switches itself to pick up calls directed to his home. His corporate VoIP telephone system also takes note of his location and redirects all corporate phone calls from his extension to his mobile IM.

He is meeting Mark for drinks later after his kids have gone to sleep. Mark works with Internet Service Providers and ICT companies to analyse their needs and provide them with the latest technology. These technologies include value added converged VoIP and video over IP services in real time, as well as VoIP and video messaging. Mark and John have been friends for years and have much in common. They both provide a high-quality, reliable service to enterprise customers, and both are ready to negotiate the tough technological challenges we face, challenges that must be addressed if efficiency is to be improved and customer service enhanced. These are goals that, in what is an increasingly competitive commercial environment, are in the interests of not just the XYZ Corporation, but the wider business community as a whole. 



Marek Lewandowski is the CEO of SalesManager Software, a position he has held since the beginning of 2005. Under his leadership the company has become a leading value chain supplier of VoIP, video telephony, presence & IM and video conferencing and data collaboration over IP software. The company supply telecoms, ISP's, networked community builders, ASPs and device manufacturers and have achieved annual growth rates of over 300 per cent over the last three years.

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