

## Move to VoIP at Your Own Pace

*IP-enabled solutions can deliver  
big benefits while protecting  
existing investments*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little doubt remains that the future of the contact center lies with cost-effective IP networks. VoIP technology is mature enough to deliver the reliability and quality of service necessary for mission-critical customer service operations, and the savings in reduced public switched telephone network (PSTN) costs alone justify choosing IP over traditional telephony systems. Add in other benefits such as flexibility, mobility, and the ability to develop much more powerful customer-facing applications, and the IP contact center is too attractive a proposition to pass up.

There's just one problem: the need to maximize the return on the extensive investments that most companies have in infrastructure and applications built on PSTN technology. Faced with the decision of whether to sacrifice those investments in order to gain the benefits of IP, many executives are inclined to follow the conservative path of sticking with the solutions they already have in place.

There is a solution, however, that resolves the dilemma—IP-enabled contact centers that, through relatively simple modifications to existing infrastructure, make it possible to add IP-based agents to a contact center while continuing to take full advantage of the PSTN systems already in place.

With an IP-enabled contact center, businesses can have all the benefits of IP today—especially the benefits offered by using IP connectivity for remote agents—and at the same time build a migration path to a pure-IP solution. Decision-makers no longer have to feel as if they are being forced to make a major transition before they are ready. The IP-enabled solution gives them complete control over the extent to which they incorporate IP into their contact centers and the pace at which they migrate from PSTN to IP.

## Move to VoIP at Your Own Pace

*IP-enabled solutions can deliver big benefits while protecting existing investments*

Everyone has heard that VoIP promises to bring big benefits to the contact center, particularly in the realm of remote agents. But many companies with extensive investments in PSTN technology are reluctant to make the leap to IP. Their reluctance is justified. Most companies that need a contact center already have one. Many of these centers are the results of years of investment, planning, and development, all involving traditional PSTN technology. Little wonder that a business with a dozen ACDs and hundreds of agents connected via PSTN lines balks at the thought of replacing a functioning, in-place system with new technology.

Fortunately, forklift upgrades are unnecessary for businesses seeking to bring the advantages of VoIP to their contact centers. There is a very viable alternative—the hybrid IP-enabled solution. The IP-enabled solution comes about through relatively simple modifications that add IP connectivity to an existing PSTN contact center. All the PSTN components in place continue to function as they always have. But the contact center also has the capability to add new agents using cost-effective IP lines.

Not only does this enable the contact center to expand without incurring additional PSTN charges—one of the most often-touted advantages of VoIP—but it also makes it easier to employ another cost-cutting strategy: the use of remote agents working in satellite offices, other regions, or even offshore. And in addition to making remote staffing more viable, IP-enabled solutions can offer a number of other valuable benefits as more contact center applications become Web-enabled and more productivity tools are available to IP remote agents and supervisors.

### The transition to IP is easier than you think

IP connectivity for voice agents seems such a radical departure from the traditional contact center paradigm that it's natural to assume that the transition is costly. But consider the ease with which IP connectivity can be added to an existing contact center. If the intent is to add IP connectivity rather than replace your entire contact center solution, then no changes to the PSTN infrastructure

are necessary. The call flows, administration, reporting, and connectivity to enterprise databases remain entirely as they were and continue to function without interruption. The agents, whether connected via IP or PSTN, continue to use the tools and processes with which they are familiar too—desktop software, agent telephones, database screen pop, and so forth.

Without jeopardizing the PSTN investment, companies can add IP connectivity to existing contact center solutions, achieving a cost-effective method of expanding the workforce while preserving the existing infrastructure and processes.

## What is an IP-enabled solution?

A PSTN contact center solution is IP enabled by adding connectivity—on top of the existing infrastructure—for IP agents.

### **It's an addition to your existing contact center, not a replacement**

An IP-enabled solution preserves investments in existing switching equipment such as ACDs and PBXs. Many companies have multisite contact centers with recently purchased PSTN equipment with years of life left in it. Connected to the ACDs and PBXs are accessories such as agent telephones, desktop computers, manager and supervisor workstations, and wallboard displays. And all of this equipment is deployed in wired facilities. Simply abandoning such an elaborate infrastructure to gain the benefits of IP, no matter how compelling those benefits are, is out of the question for these companies. But adding IP on top of the existing infrastructure makes perfect sense.

### **It's an inexpensive way to tap into the benefits of IP**

It also makes sense from a cost-of-ownership standpoint. The hardware and software required to add IP to a PSTN contact center are relatively inexpensive. Implementation is also relatively simple, reducing startup costs and enabling productivity more quickly. And the IP-enabled contact center lends itself well to incrementally adding IP capacity as needs dictate. Add to these savings the cost benefits inherent in all IP solutions—reduced tie line and network costs and flexibility to deploy agents in the least-expensive facilities and locations—and IP-enabled solutions are a bargain.

### **It's a way of extending your PSTN applications to IP agents**

And finally, the IP-enabled solution takes full advantage of current call-routing applications and reporting tools, making it possible to develop call flows that incorporate PSTN agents, IP agents, or both, and to run reports that combine data on both types of agents.

## What are the advantages of an IP-enabled solution for your business?

The business advantages of the IP-enabled solution fall into five general categories.

### Remote agents and reduced toll charges

One of the most significant advantages of the IP-enabled contact center is what it does for satellite offices and remote agents. IP agents can be located anywhere—in another building, in another city, or even in another country—and have the same capabilities and level of supervision as agents in the main contact center.

Using agents who work remotely has many cost benefits. You can:

- Attract and retain highly skilled agents by offering the option of working at home
- Reduce facility costs
- Locate contact centers in areas where labor costs are lower
- Access new labor pools such as students and homebound workers
- Improve disaster preparedness
- Handle seasonal fluctuations better
- Staff around the clock and during peak periods

The IP-enabled contact center reduces the primary expense associated with remote agents—the toll charges for the telephone lines that connect the remote agent to the contact center. With IP, remote agents are connected via data lines only, and voice traffic as well as digital traffic is routed to these agents without incurring PSTN expenses.

### Cost-effective multisite networking

The advantages of the multisite “virtual” contact center, especially for large enterprises, are well known. It allows businesses to locate operations where facility and labor costs are low; it makes it possible to extend business hours by using “follow-the-sun” strategies; and it makes it possible to offer a quicker response to customer requests and to keep staff more consistently busy by balancing loads across sites. But there’s one significant disadvantage—the PSTN costs incurred by cross-site routing. IP-enabling the multisite contact center and using IP lines to carry the voice traffic greatly reduces the costs of networking multiple sites.

### **Flexibility and mobility**

With IP agents as part of the staffing mix, the PSTN contact center suddenly has attributes it didn't have before. One of the biggest advantages is that IP agents are mobile. If necessary, they can move around the business campus and work at any PC with an Internet connection—without the expense of switching shelves and copper lines, and without increasing your PSTN costs.

This mobility supports a wide range of business goals. It helps to reduce facility costs by allowing the contact center to take advantage of temporarily vacant cubicles. It makes it possible to temporarily increase contact center staff without building or acquiring dedicated facilities for the temporary workers. Mobility also contributes to emergency response, helping to keep your mission-critical business applications running even when power outages or facility damage put the main contact center out of action. It enables businesses to locate agents in satellite offices where facility costs or wages are lower. And if offshore staffing is part of the business strategy, IP connectivity greatly reduces the expense of routing call traffic to offshore facilities.

### **Simple Web-based access**

By definition, IP agents, whether they are working in a cubicle on your premises, in a home office, or in a satellite office in a distant city, have access to email and the Web. Since tools for communication among contact center staff are increasingly based on Internet technology, this means that remote agents and supervisors, even working from home, have access to the same information local agents have.

### **Extending the call center across the enterprise**

One of the most dramatic capabilities of the IP-enabled contact center is the ability to make any knowledge worker in the company into a potential contact center agent. Incorporating knowledge workers in the customer service pool allows businesses to offer superior service to their most important customers.

Example: Let's say that a financial institution needs to occasionally route calls to loan officers outside of the call center. With IP, the loan officers can be located anywhere on the corporate network and can take calls on an as-needed basis, with reduced expense to the company and the benefit of full reporting back to the call center.

## **Protecting the investment in existing infrastructure and applications**

A PSTN contact center investment extends far beyond equipment and facilities. It includes application development, training, established procedures for system administration, reporting tools and structures, and more. And virtually every part of this multifaceted investment is preserved by the IP-enabled contact center.

### **Consolidating IP and PSTN routing**

A single platform provides investment protection by routing calls via PSTN and/or VoIP. It also provides the ability to incrementally add VoIP agents at your own pace, while continuing to leverage current call center applications.

### **Centralizing development and administration**

Another advantage of the IP-enabled solution is a single development environment for call flows. Developers use the same interface to create routing scenarios for IP agents that they use to route calls to PSTN agents. This makes it possible to route calls to the agent with the best skills to answer them, regardless of location or the type of transport. Administration is also consolidated. Whether agents are connected via PSTN or VoIP, local or remote, all functions can be managed from your current call center software application.

### **Consolidating reporting**

All the statistics regarding IP agents, local or remote, are collected along with the statistics on PSTN agents for accurate reporting and analysis. This means that a business could have one or more PSTN contact centers augmented by IP agents in many different locations and still view the entire agent population as a single, virtual contact center. It also means that report templates developed for PSTN agent groups work equally well for IP agent groups or combined groups.

## **A migration path to a pure-IP solution**

Finally, not only does the IP-enabled solution offer a painless way to begin to take advantage of IP technology, but it also becomes the migration path to a pure-IP solution if the company's business managers want it to be. The IP-enabled solution allows contact center managers and developers to become familiar with IP technology at a controlled pace. The company can gradually shift agents from PSTN to IP or make the transition to pure IP when its PSTN systems reach end of life, when business factors make it necessary to consolidate multiple centers, or according to any other business drivers unique to the company.

## **Aspect Uniphi Connect: Aspect's IP-enabled solution**

For companies that already have a substantial investment in PSTN technology, Aspect offers Uniphi Connect, an easily installed IP addition to its industry-leading Aspect® Call Center. So that you can compare it to competing solutions, we've listed its features here.

## Requirement Aspect Uniphi Connect Features

### Simple migration

For companies with an Aspect Call Center, installing Uniphi Connect is straightforward and simple. They simply plug the Uniphi Connect IP card into an existing slot in the Call Center cabinet, configure it with existing Call Center software, and then install Uniphi Connect Agent Desktop software on agent PCs.

### Flexibility and mobility

IP connectivity increases the flexibility of the contact center and the mobility of the staff, and Uniphi Connect is designed to take maximum advantage of this potential. We offer with it, for instance, a self-configuring IP agent telephone that auto-configures when it is plugged in and then can be moved from place to place with no reconfiguration.

### Centrally administered advanced routing

With Uniphi Connect, the routing capabilities of the Aspect Call Center can be used to develop call flows that include both PSTN and IP agents. Calls can be routed to either type of agent based on business requirements and transferred, along with any data collected during the call, from PSTN agents to IP agents and vice versa. And the CTI capabilities of the contact center make it possible to use data-directed routing and screen pop with IP agents too.

### Comprehensive reporting

Aspect offers real-time and historical reporting options for agents, supervisors, and managers that draw statistics directly from Aspect Call Center. With Uniphi Connect, all of these reporting tools include statistics on IP agents—without additional integration effort.

### Browser-based access for agents and supervisors

Remote agents and supervisors linked via Uniphi Connect can take advantage of browser-based interfaces for:

- The Uniphi Connect Agent Desktop
- Standard Aspect Call Center real-time and historical reports
- Schedule-access and change-notification tools in the Aspect eWorkforce Management Empower package
- Performance statistics dashboards with Aspect Performance Optimization for eWorkforce Management

### No retraining required

Having a single agent desktop for both PSTN and IP allows contact centers to move agents from PSTN to IP without retraining. Because the desktop functions on Windows-based systems, Web browsers, or Citrix clients, agents can move from system to system without learning a new interface. And since one parameter change is all that's needed to invoke IP or PSTN, administrators don't have to learn complicated procedures to reassign agents from PSTN to IP or vice versa.

### Seamless IP quality monitoring

Quality-management solutions providers such as NICE, Verint, Witness, and others now offer Aspect-validated versions of their flagship products for use with the Aspect Uniphi Connect solution. Aspect customers can continue to use quality-monitoring solutions to monitor and analyze voice calls that occur over PSTN and IP, regardless of how agents are deployed.

### Migration path to a pure-IP solution

The convergence of voice and data onto the IP network is one of the major strategic drivers in the Aspect product roadmap. Our goal is to make it possible for our customers, many of whom have substantial investments in PSTN contact center infrastructure, to migrate to IP contact centers at a pace that suits their business requirements and protects their PSTN investments. Aspect Uniphi Connect is part of that strategy, giving PSTN contact centers the benefits of IP without jeopardizing investments in traditional PSTN solutions. We also offer the Aspect Uniphi Suite, a pure-IP contact center solution based on the functionality of our proven call center, IVR, and CTI solutions. Customers migrating from PSTN Aspect solutions to the Uniphi Suite will find that the agent groups and call flows they developed for their existing solutions will work with Uniphi Suite.



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