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HOSTING MICROSOFT

An 1105 Redmond Media Group
Information Resource
and Guide to
Hosting Solutions Providers



AppRiver At-a-Glance

- Founded in 2002
- 150-250 New Businesses per Week
- Over 26,000 Customers Worldwide
- More Than 4 Million Corporate Users
- 97% Customer Retention Rate

Service Highlights

- Free 30-Day Trial for All Services
- Flexible Monthly & Yearly Agreements
- No Cancellation Penalty
- 24x7x365 Customer Support
- No-hassle Setup
- Spam & Phishing Capture Rates of Over 99%
- Spam Analytics Updated 2,000 - 4,000 Times Daily
- Four Virus Scanning Engines
- Off-site Spam & Virus Quarantine
- Dynamic Email Backup
- Held Spam-Virus Reporting

Industry Highlights

"Speed-spam and virus capture rates second to none in the security industry" - September 2006 Frost & Sullivan, Report on Pattern Recognition

- 2007 Ranked No. 61 in IT Services, No. 550 Overall, Inc. 5,000
- 2007 Florida Governor's Entrepreneurship Award
- 2007 CRN Names AppRiver to "Emerging Tech Dynamos"
- 2006 Top 10 Private Security Company Red Herring
- 2006 Readers Choice, MExchange.org
- 2005 Test Center Recommended, Computer Reseller News (CRN)
- 2005 Best Security Product Finalist, Computer Reseller News (CRN)

About AppRiver

AppRiver was founded in April of 2002 to provide simple, yet powerful email security solutions to businesses of any size. Our Services and technology are now protecting more than 26,000 customers around the world from spam, viruses, and internet pollution. Customers who use our SecureTide™ service appreciate the affordable, highly-effective solution to their spam and virus problems. Customers who have chosen to outsource their email to us like the easy administration of our Shoreline™ management interface, comprehensive security, and our award winning customer support. **In fact, of all the information listed on our marketing material, by far our most treasured accomplishment is that we have maintained a 97% customer retention rate since our first year in business.**

AppRiver is a privately-owned, Managed Service Provider specializing in secure messaging solutions for all things email. From the beginning, AppRiver has focused on creating solutions that provide spam and virus capture rates second to none. Proprietary technology is used in all service offerings to ensure quality, ease of use, and affordability. Service offerings include SecureTide™ spam and virus protection, Message Sniffer™ spam detection engine available to OEMs, and Secure Microsoft Exchange Hosting with Shoreline™.



- Unlimited Storage
- Akamai High Availability
- Embedded Security
- Enhanced Mobility
- Easy Administration

AppRiver's secure Exchange Hosting with Shoreline™ simplifies the setup, provisioning and management of Microsoft Exchange, utilizing our comprehensive architecture with the reliability and performance of Akamai's infrastructure. SecureTide™ spam and virus protection service surrounds our Hosted Exchange, providing a comprehensive protection. Our Free 30 Day Trial allows organizations to try the system risk-free.

How Does AppRiver Compare?

Storage	AppRiver	Other Providers
Unlimited Mailbox Storage	✓	⚠
Public Folders	1 GB Included	Unknown
Additional Storage	Included	⚠
High Availability (Akamai)	AppRiver	Other Providers
End to End Route Optimization	✓	None
TCP Optimization	✓	None
Security	AppRiver	Other Providers
Inbound Spam Filtering	✓	⚠
Outbound Spam Filtering	✓	⚠
Fraud Protection	✓	⚠
Offsite spam quarantine	✓	⚠
Spam Journal for end-users	✓	⚠
Configurable Legal Disclaimers	✓	⚠
Content Filtering Tools	✓	⚠
Compliance Tools	✓	⚠
Virus Protection	AppRiver	Other Providers
Anti-Virus	4 A/V Engines Included	Usually Only 1
Zero Hour A/V Protection	✓	⚠
Mobile Device Support	AppRiver	Other Providers
Microsoft Mobile 5	✓	⚠
Blackberry	✓	⚠
Goodlink	✓	⚠
Mobile Device Filtering	✓	⚠
Mailboxes	AppRiver	Other Providers
Mailboxes Managed by AppRiver	Over 4 million Mailboxes	160,000 mailboxes (largest known competitor)
Migration Support	AppRiver	Other Providers
Integrated Split Domain	✓	Not Integrated/Configurable
Outlook Setup Wizard	✓	Not Available

Hosted Exchange *without* the Hassle

First



to Offer Unlimited Storage.



to Provide Akamai Enabled High Availability.



to Hermetically Seal a Hosted Exchange Service within a comprehensive Spam & Virus Protection System.



to Market with Turn-key Proprietary Architecture.



to Provide Personalized, Daily Quarantine Reports.

AppRiver Partner Program



AppRiver is completely channel centric and provides industry leading products for the two fastest growing SaaS applications: Email Protection and Hosted Exchange. AppRiver's partner programs enable you to tap into this market without risk or high cost.

- Recent studies estimate there are currently 856 million hosted e-mail accounts; this is expected to grow to 1,449 million by the end of 2009, or 69 percent over the four-year period.
- Hosted Exchange is the fastest growing SaaS application.

Enhance your service offerings with Secure Hosted Exchange Solutions from AppRiver:

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AppRiver

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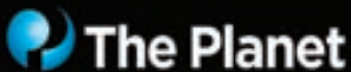
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- Register for a Free Webinar on "Selling Hosted MS-SBS Services"





Hosting's Time Is Now

BY SCOTT BEKKER, Editor in chief

There's been a flurry of activity around hosted services in the last year or so. It feels as electric as it did when the abbreviation ASP automatically meant Application Service Provider. But the infrastructure feels better now, stronger, more real.

Perhaps it's the billions of dollars being invested by Google, Microsoft and Yahoo! to build out data center capacity for slightly mysterious ends. Maybe it's the runaway success of Salesforce.com with its predominantly Software as a Service (SaaS) delivery model for business applications. Perhaps it's the fact that major vendors are starting to offer hosted versions of software that had traditionally been offered exclusively through the sales of licenses for local installation.

What all those companies recognize is that the underlying networks for remotely accessing hosted applications are much more solid than they were a decade ago. Broadband is everywhere. Customers who rely on hosted applications can be assured that all their branch offices and even most home offices have the bandwidth to get the same performance as the corporate headquarters. With wireless networks popping up not just at Starbucks but at McDonalds, too, traveling staff can easily find a spot to access hosted applications on the road.

Buying applications as hosted services can free IT departments from the need to add staff for new applications or it can permit redirection of highly paid professionals from network maintenance tasks to business development work. It can also make pilot implementations trivial to set up and take much of the guesswork and expense out of installing a new solution.

Solutions providers have thornier issues. The SaaS model threatens lucrative installation opportunities. But as hosters seek new business opportunities, they're reaching out to solutions providers with recurring margins and other innovative channel programs. Solutions providers with vertical expertise, on the other hand, have brand new opportunities to partner with hosters and offer new applications that can reach a geographically limitless audience.

In the same vein, any ISV needs to look hard at available hosting options for providing their solutions in the SaaS model. With the biggest vendors leading the way, hosted versions of software could quickly become a checkbox that every ISV needs to offer just to compete. From a straight development perspective, the hosted model has its advantages, such as the ability to roll out security updates once and be sure every user receives them.

All of these opportunities are floating out there for customers, solutions providers and developers to grab. We've pulled together this collection of information from some of the major hosting providers in the market. We hope it will help you make sense of the potentially cost-saving and business-building opportunities for your organization in these transitional times. ●

HOSTING MICROSOFT

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"If you want to grow your business, you have to focus on your strengths," says Carter Burden, CEO and President of Logicworks. "Today's businesses are well-advised to fully exploit their core competencies, and to seek partners to fill in the gaps."

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By having faithfully stuck to its own core competency—deploying and managing highly available Web application delivery environments—Logicworks is uniquely positioned to partner with consultants, system integrators, and independent software vendors.

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Achieving Growth

Using a consultative sales discovery process, Logicworks works with its partners to help first define the business requirements that need to be satisfied, before designing a technology solution.

Logicworks helps partners be more successful by aiding in capacity and disaster recovery planning; assisting with RFIs, RFQs, RFPs, and security questionnaires; taking partners' customers on data center tours; crafting customized SLAs; enabling regulatory compliant solutions; and offering flexible billing solutions.

Demonstrating the highest level of competence and expertise with Microsoft technologies and a proven ability to meet customer needs, Logicworks enables clients to achieve better IT- and business-alignment, and improved service delivery to its own end-users.

For more information or to arrange a meeting to discuss your requirements, contact Logicworks today.



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UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS: Hosted Solutions

By Joe Schurman
Microsoft MVP

Gurdeep Singh Pall, Microsoft Corporate VP, Unified Communications Group, surrounded by new devices supporting Microsoft's Unified Communications strategy, which includes a hosted option.



SOURCE: MICROSOFT

A 30-year paradigm shift in telecommunications technology has breached the desktop with a newly converged and evolved set of communication and collaboration tools. Microsoft comes to the market full bore with a solution it calls Unified Communications (UC), which includes a suite of collaboration and messaging tools that integrate with traditional TDM and VoIP services to create a fully developed communications platform. All that is leveraged directly from the desktop and within the ubiquitous Microsoft Office suite. With an overabundance of Microsoft partner and customer interest, Microsoft has also provided a hosted solution for the UC platform that will create new services capabilities for hosted environments, appealing to both small to midsize business (SMB) and enterprise markets. Here is an overview of these hosted solutions for the newly released and announced Microsoft UC platform.

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Flash Site Builder	18 Pages	—	—
Photo Gallery	✓	✓	✓
RSS Feed Creator	✓	—	\$4.99/month
Ad-free Blog	✓	✓	Freeware
Map & Driving Directions	✓	✓	—
Dynamic Web Content	✓	✓	—
Web Statistics	✓	✓	✓
E-mail Newsletter Tool	✓	\$10/month	\$3.99/month
In2site Live Dialogue	✓	—	—
Chat Channels	✓	—	✓
Form Builder	✓	✓	—
1&1 Marketing Center	✓	—	—
Premium Software Suite	✓	—	—
90-Day Money Back Guarantee	✓	—	—
Support	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Toll-free Phone, E-mail	24/7 Phone, E-mail
Price Per Month	\$9.99	\$19.95	\$14.99
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~~\$119.88~~

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The Business Value of Hosted Unified Communications

IT business decision makers are split between outsourcing IT services and managing these services internally. Up until a few months ago, hosting collaboration services was nearly impossible due to the burdens of required integration, implementation, network traffic and security. Today, the Microsoft Unified Communications 2007 platform provides the capability to implement these collaborative systems in a hosted model to assist organizations who either do not have the expertise and physical real estate to host application servers, or the amount of IT staff to manage these services onsite. In a hosted environment, the Microsoft UC platform can be managed by UC and MCSE certified technicians and still provide a localized approach for these organizations even though these services may be hosted miles, cities or countries away.

Based upon previous case study information and by interviewing new customers, Microsoft and its UC partner organizations concluded that providing a hosted model in addition to a consolidated, onsite approach would appeal to IT decision makers who were concerned about the amount of application, IP and telephony-based services that are required with a bundled UC solution. Providing a hosted solution for these services

Microsoft concluded that providing its Office collaboration and messaging servers in a supported virtual environment was critical.

relieves the IT decision maker by providing a managed services package that usually only involves an upfront deployment fee and ongoing support contract so that the organization's representative doesn't have to worry about deploying, storing and supporting these services on-site, which can definitely be cost and physically prohibitive.

Based on customer requests, Microsoft also realized that providing its Office collaboration and messaging servers in a supported

virtual environment was critical, so upon release of the 2007 edition of Microsoft's UC platform, both Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 are supported on environments running Microsoft Virtual Server 2007.

These modifications in application architecture now create a host of new options for the customer that are not limited to an on-premise deployment as they were before.

Microsoft UC Core Products

The Microsoft UC product portfolio is comprised of both collaboration and messaging server products, which include the following:

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

Microsoft's flagship mail services product, Microsoft Exchange Server has dominated enterprise organizations and SMBs for years. Exchange Server 2007 now provides additional and enhanced features to customers such as Unified Messaging, which integrates voicemail and calling features within Microsoft Office Outlook 2007. In addition, enhancements have been made for remote mail services, mobile messaging with Windows Mobile 6 devices and now, hosted services for e-mail, filtering, security, archiving and business continuity support for a never-loss email service.

Microsoft OCS 2007

Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007 is VoIP on steroids. Based on a VoIP server platform, OCS provides a combination of communication tools such as Instant Messaging, voice services through VoIP and call controls for corporate phone systems, as well as hosted online meeting services. OCS provides support for new VoIP devices developed specifically for the OCS client, Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 including video and voice devices, such as new desktop phones with integrated video and color display, monitors with video support, and meeting service devices like Microsoft Office RoundTable that provide panoramic video displays and active speaker recognition.



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- Backup and Disaster Recovery
- Endpoint Security
- Integrated Reports
- Maximum Security
- Flexible Web Based Administration
- Fast and Easy Deployment

Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007

Microsoft Office Live Meeting is the latest version of Microsoft's online meeting service technology. It provides a wealth of features, including video integration with Microsoft RoundTable, VoIP and Internet Audio Broadcast support, the ability to share presentations and data, polling and Q&A panels, as well as recording capabilities for on-demand viewing. Live Meeting provides an Internet-based meeting platform that scales to millions of users and offers the highest quality of video, voice and data support.

Each product plays a specific role in enabling effective communication and collaboration on a global scale. These services cross firewalls using a series of standard communication protocols known as Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) and Real Time Protocol (RTP). Utilizing these standards-based protocols Microsoft's Unified Communications servers can now communicate with each other and with non-Microsoft platform services using a common language. This capability also provides a truly hosted platform for customers that require a hosted model.

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 Hosted Messaging Services

Microsoft has provided hosted solutions for enterprise messaging through earlier releases of Microsoft Exchange Server. The difference with what is provided in the UC 2007 platform for Exchange Server and previous versions is that now Microsoft Exchange Server supports Unified Messaging with voicemail integration. In addition to these services, Microsoft has introduced newly enhanced Exchange Server, server-based solutions to provide state-of-the-art messaging continuity (guaranteed, uninterrupted e-mail service), security services for encryption and anti-virus/anti-spam, filtering services, as well as compliance services.

The following Exchange Server products are available within a hosted model:

Microsoft Exchange Hosted E-mail

Exchange hosted e-mail provides a pay-as-you-go model that enables you to scale up or down as needed, minimizing your financial risk. Microsoft Hosted Exchange can help you free up valuable capital, IT staff and other costly resources for more effective, strategic use within your organization.

The Microsoft Exchange 2007 Hosted Messaging Services model offers four different products for filtering, archiving, continuity and encryption.

Microsoft Exchange Hosted Filtering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real-time threat prevention features• Multi-layer anti-spam and antivirus• Customized content and policy enforcement
Microsoft Exchange Hosted Archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-mail retention for help with compliance and e-discovery• Customized report generation for help demonstrating compliance• Fully indexed, searchable archive
Microsoft Exchange Hosted Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uninterrupted e-mail accessibility• Rapid recovery from unplanned disasters and network outages• Thirty-day rolling historical e-mail store
Microsoft Exchange Hosted Encryption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full e-mail encryption• No public and private key management• Gateway, policy-based e-mail encryption



Sinking an eagle putt keeps the CEO impressed.



Crashing your email server doesn't.

STEVE THE IT DIRECTOR arrived to his office early this morning. Today, he was looking forward to a 7 a.m. tee time with his CEO. His plan was to quickly check email, then head directly to the course. But as he attempted to open his email client, his system administrator burst into the office, "Steve, bad news. We were here all night upgrading the virus scanning engine, and the servers wouldn't come back up. I don't know what happened, and we are still trying to reach the vendor!" Setting down his clubs, Steve realizes his golf game with the CEO won't be happening now. Rather than sinking a few putts and strategizing on a new IT project, he'll be fighting fires again this morning—along with everyone else on his team.

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Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 offers secure third-party instant messaging with video conferencing.

Microsoft Exchange Hosted Filtering

Exchange Hosted Filtering incorporates multiple filters to actively help protect businesses' inbound and outbound e-mail from spam, viruses, phishing scams and e-mail policy violations.

Microsoft Exchange Hosted Archive

Exchange Hosted Archive provides storage and retrieval of both old e-mail and instant messages.

Microsoft Exchange Hosted Continuity

Exchange Hosted Continuity is a business continuity solution that helps protect and provide continuous access to e-mail.

Microsoft Exchange Hosted Encryption

Exchange Hosted Encryption is a convenient, easy-to-use e-mail encryption service that helps safely deliver your confidential business communications.

Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 Hosted VoIP

The most extreme collaboration possibilities come from Office Communications Server, and in this case, hosting is an option, as well. As part of the UC platform, Office Communications Server 2007 offers users the ability to access features such as secure instant messaging with multiple third-party products such as Yahoo!, MSN and AOL; OCS voice services that allow users to use VoIP for communications or call controls for their existing corporate phone system; plus hosted meeting services using Live Meeting technology integrated within an optional video device called Microsoft Office RoundTable.

The major feature release of this new platform for hosted solutions is the support for

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Microsoft RoundTable

A new device from Microsoft, RoundTable creates panoramic video of the meeting place and includes eight microphones and software for tracking the flow of conversation among speakers.



Microsoft Virtual Server. Previous versions of Office Communications Server, such as Live Communications Server, had the ability to run on a virtual server environment, but this solution was not supported. With OCS 2007, Microsoft now supports a fully hosted model running on Microsoft's advanced virtual software, Microsoft Virtual Server. Running OCS on a virtual environment provides organizations with the power of real-time communications tools with the flexibility of a hosted model.

Hosted Meeting Services with Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007

Microsoft Office Live Meeting provides users with the ability to present information, share video and provide online real-time demonstrations across firewalls. Live Meeting comes in two forms, both a hosted model using the Live Meeting online service or hosted through Microsoft Office Communications Server, another Unified

Communications platform product. Common uses for Live Meeting include sales presentations, company meetings and job interviews. The built-in recording feature allows you to record the entire session inclusive of video, data and voice and allows for posting recorded meetings for later on-demand access. Complete with user interfacing polls, a Questions & Answers panel, and support for Internet Audio Broadcasting, Live Meeting also supports the Microsoft RoundTable device to share panoramic video and active speaker controls making your remote meetings more effective than ever before.

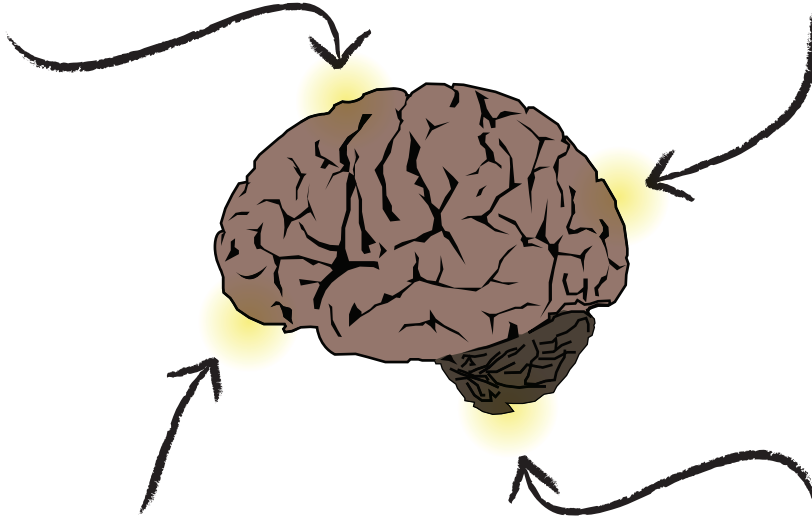
Putting It All Together

Each of these hosted elements creates new possibilities for enterprise organizations and SMBs. Taken together, the technologies can open up huge opportunities for productivity gains while holding steady, or even reducing, overall infrastructure costs. ●

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PREACHING CONVERGENCE

Microsoft is finally getting real about a one-stop strategy for e-mail, voice mail, IM and Web conferencing—and that's creating plenty of opportunities.

By Lauren Gibbons Paul

When Bill Vollerthum got a call from Microsoft last year asking whether he wanted to be one of 15 companies on the Partner Advisory Group for Microsoft's soon-to-be-announced Unified Communications (UC) strategy, he found it hard to suppress his glee. After all, Vollerthum's company, Enabling Technologies Corp., a Gold Certified Partner, had years of experience with conventional PBX-based telephony and had dabbled in voice/data convergence. Getting the early scoop on Microsoft's UC plans would position Vollerthum to be one of the first partners aboard the official UC train.

"I was very excited. I saw that this could be a very positive revenue stream for us going forward," says Vollerthum, president and CEO of the Glen Arm, Md., company. Things moved quickly after Microsoft publicly unveiled its UC products and vision in June 2006. Enabling Technologies has worked on five beta adoptions of Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging (UM), which gives users a single identity for access to voice, fax and e-mail data from the office and the road. It also allows them to manage their e-mail, calendars and personal contacts by telephone.

So far, "the product is living up to the hype," says Vollerthum. "It has been unbelievably stable. We're seeing a real buzz in the marketplace about this product."

Exchange Server 2007 was released to manufacturing last December; other prod-

ucts under the UC umbrella were released in 2007 (see "Product Stack," p. 19). In a public Executive E-mail message in June 2006, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates predicted that such Unified Communications innovations will "dramatically streamline the way we communicate at work and stay in touch with friends and family at home."

Though Microsoft didn't invent the concept, UC/UM is a rather revolutionary approach. The idea is giving people one way to communicate, for work and for play, that transcends the current pitfalls we all put up with on a daily basis. The classic, simple example is calling a colleague about an urgent matter. You get her voice mail, so you leave a message. Then you send an e-mail. Next, you try her cell phone. All to no avail.

RCP P

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Steve Kahan
Vice President
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Q Who is The Planet?

A The Planet is the largest privately held, dedicated server hosting provider in the world. Serving more than 22,000 businesses worldwide, we provide reliable, scalable and affordable Web and IT hosting services, enabling small companies to successfully grow their businesses.

Q Why has The Planet teamed with Microsoft on its Small Business Server (SBS) to offer a hosted e-mail and collaboration solution?

A Research shows that one in four small businesses are actively looking for more cost-effective and manageable e-mail and mobility solutions. More than 50 percent are willing and interested in evaluating a "hosted service" model that can minimize upfront costs while delivering dependable, expandable outsourced communications technology to keep their business growing. By implementing SBS through a hosted model, customers will reduce their total cost of ownership by 60 percent and gain business flexibility with no long-term commitments.

Q As a System Integrator, what are the advantages of offering hosted SBS to my clients?

A The bottom line is you will make more money selling hosted SBS by gaining

access to high-margin recurring monthly revenues versus a one-time product commission. Additional benefits include:

- Rapid deployment, which delivers business value in days – not weeks
- A complete sales toolkit with everything required to start selling hosted SBS to clients
- Your own account manager, who provides sales support, monthly reporting and bi-annual business reviews
- Leads from The Planet's marketing campaigns

Q What benefits does The Planet's hosted SBS provide my clients?

A Your customers get an affordable and customizable "all-in-one" hosted Microsoft Exchange, SharePoint and SQL Server solution in a turnkey package. It gives them more cost-effective, productive ways to get "anytime, anywhere" Microsoft solutions for business-critical e-mail and collaboration, using The Planet's world-class data centers and supported by the personalized, dedicated service they expect from you as their trusted IT advisor.

Q How does The Planet support its hosted Microsoft solutions?

A You retain complete control of your client account and continue to bill for support services that both you and The Planet provide. The Planet's expert technical support team is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to assist you in servicing your clients. The Planet's technical team supports you and your clients with system provisioning and hardening, daily data backups, around-the-clock system monitoring, upgrades, security patches and much more.

Q If I'm interested, what is my next step?

A It's easy. Just visit The Planet's Web site at http://www.theplanet.com/partners/system_integrator.asp and register, or sign up for an informational webinar. Or, call 1-866-325-0045.

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THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Microsoft has never been afraid of moving onto turf already populated by other industry heavyweights, and its approach to Unified Communications is no different, according to Irwin Lazar, principal analyst for Nemertes Research Inc. in Chicago.

Microsoft's chief competitors in this space: Cisco Systems Inc. and IBM Corp./Lotus, says Lazar. Cisco's Unified Communicator client competes directly with Microsoft's Office Communicator. Meanwhile, Lotus Notes (now owned by IBM), which pioneered group collaboration, now has Unified Communications features.

But Lazar doesn't view Unified Communications as a serious horse race. "It's not going to be a winner-take-all," he says, noting that many companies will use Microsoft desktop, IM and Web-conferencing products, "but will want to integrate that into their Cisco telephony system." Getting corporate America to accept Microsoft as a telephony expert will be a harder, though not impossible, sell. Time will tell just how well Microsoft can demonstrate its chops in telephony.

So far, Lazar thinks Microsoft has done an excellent job of educating the market on its Unified Communications strategy. "[Microsoft has] gotten people talking. [It has] shown people what is possible," he says. "[The company has] a chasm to cross to get an enterprise to consider a Microsoft telephony system, but [it] will make it in some cases," particularly among smaller organizations. —L.P.

The UM aspect of UC provides a single identity across all modes and devices, greasing the wheels of communication, at least to those with whom you want to communicate. So, using the previous example, you wouldn't waste time e-mailing your colleague because you'd see at a glance that she isn't online. When you dialed her work number, your call

We believe Unified Communications is the next big messaging app for the next three years. We're betting the company on it.

—Bill Volerthum, President and CEO, Enabling Technologies Corp.

would automatically forward to her cell phone (assuming that you're on her list of high-priority contacts) and, within moments, you should be speaking with her. (Embedded business rules allow you to prioritize calls—such as those from your boss or best client—and to indicate your presence, or immediate availability, to some people but not others.)

Another example: You're having an instant-messaging (IM) exchange with a co-worker. During the discussion, you realize you need to escalate to a phone call. Thanks to integrated VoIP telephony, you could initiate the call right in the IM client. Then you could bring in another client or colleague and review PowerPoint slides together, thanks to integrated Web-conferencing capabilities.

"[Unified Communications] is about in-context transitions that enable productivity," says Michael Khalili, Unified Communications product manager for Microsoft. "It's about breaking down the walls between voice mail, fax and e-mail. It's about choosing the tool that's the most appropriate for the context."

Too Many Devices, Too Little Time

In speaking about Microsoft's Unified Communications strategy in June 2006, Microsoft Business Division President Jeff Raikes quoted research indicating that the average organization has 6.4 different types of communications devices and 4.8 different communications applications per user. As the number of devices and applications grows, of course, productivity is likely to decline. Unified Messaging to the rescue!

People used to have to have multiple devices and applications because of the systems' limitations, says Marc Sanders, group product manager for Microsoft Unified Communications. "Now, we're putting people in control of their systems. It's about productivity and convenient access and faster response times."

Microsoft's UC strategy is closely linked to its "People-Ready Business" approach, which aims to amplify business results through software that empowers employees. "There's a direct correlation between a company's aptitude for collaboration and communication and its resulting business performance," Raikes said during his keynote.

Unified Communications entails converging e-mail, IM, VoIP, and audio/video/Web conferencing into an intuitive experience that's integrated with the business applications—such as Microsoft Office—and business processes that employees use every day. The resulting environment is the “new world of work” that Gates often refers to.

Unified Communications Lineup

Two products are at the heart of Microsoft's UC strategy: Exchange Server 2007 and Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007, according to Khalili. Exchange Server handles the asynchronous store-and-forward communications, while OCS takes care of real-time communications such as IM, voice and voice conferencing. If the other party in the live communication doesn't respond, the communication becomes asynchronous and is handed from OCS back to Exchange. Other forthcoming Microsoft products contain UM applications such as enhanced meeting capabilities and “soft phones,” software that uses Internet technology to make calls.

Microsoft executives have been quick to emphasize the important role to be played by what Raikes calls the “broad partner ecosystem” that will use OCS as a platform to add UC capabilities to other applications.

Khalili envisions several scenarios for partner involvement. First, systems integrators that, like Enabling Technologies, have telephony experience will be in high demand as companies migrate to Exchange Server 2007. “There is tremendous opportunity around the deployment of these systems,” he says.

Integrators that have done other Microsoft implementations would do well to gain the skills needed to play in the UC world. “We have partners that are having extensive success with SharePoint and Office 2007 deployments. Our UC strategy allows them to integrate UC into those platforms,” says Sanders. “[Partners] can expand their competency and add in the advanced infrastructure expertise. That gives them the chance to be Exchange deployment partners in addition to being a desktop solution partner. They can have a deeper exchange with the customer.”

The ROI of UC

Many companies may have been planning to put off upgrading to Exchange Server 2007. But their plans may change when they see what UC can do for their businesses. The most obvious benefit: server consolidation. Vollerthum says many of his early adopter customers were able to go from separate servers for voice mail, e-mail and fax service down to one that can handle all three functions. That capability makes administration easier and, over time, reduces hardware costs.

Replacing the conventional PBX-based phone system in favor of VoIP is an obvious source of savings, though some companies may be reluctant to do a wholesale migration due to service-quality concerns. Exchange Server 2007 runs on a 64-bit processor,

PRODUCT STACK

Microsoft delivered the components for its Unified Communications-enabled solutions in 2007.

PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	RELEASE DATE*
Exchange Server 2007	Unified Messaging, messaging and communications software with unified inbox, including e-mail, voice mail and faxing functionality	DEC 2006** with UC Service Pack in OCT 2007
Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007	SIP-based, real-time communication platform with UM capabilities; hub for Unified Communications solutions developed by partners	JUL 2007
Microsoft Office Live Meeting	Conferencing service designed to optimize collaboration and training	OCT 2007
Microsoft Office Communicator 2007	Unified Communications client that works with Office Communications Server 2007 to deliver a presence-based, enterprise VoIP “soft phone”	JUL 2007
Microsoft Office RoundTable	Audio-video collaboration device with a 360-degree camera; combined with Office Communications Server 2007, RoundTable extends the meeting environment across multiple locations	OCT 2007

SOURCE: MICROSOFT *ALL DATES REFER TO CALENDAR YEAR
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THE PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

Time will tell whether Microsoft's Unified Communications (UC) play lives up to Bill Gates' freewheeling vision of reinventing how people reach each other at work, at home and from the road—and what benefits Microsoft partners can expect to reap as a result. If your line of business meshes in any way with the UC strategy, you're likely to find yourself climbing aboard the "UC Express."

If you weren't one of the elite few tapped last winter to be part of Microsoft's UC group, don't despair. Most UM products haven't yet shipped and there's still plenty of time to put together your own company's UC plan.

Where to start? First, read up on Microsoft's new UC products and decide which best fit your company's profile. The next step, says Microsoft's Khalili: "Begin engaging with your partner contacts at Microsoft to get plugged into the machine."

Because telephony requires a specialized skill set, it may make sense for consultants and integrators to consider partnering with other companies that have demonstrated track records in those areas. "It can be tough to develop these skills from the ground up," says Enabling Technologies' Vollerthum. "It may make more sense to partner with a company that already has the skills." Meanwhile, keep an eye on the rest of the field (see "The Competitive Landscape," p. 18).

In any case, Vollerthum says, UC is the real deal. "We believe this is the next big messaging app for the next three years," he says. "We're betting the company on it." —L.P.

potentially boosting throughput enough to get past those concerns.

Increased productivity of peripatetic knowledge workers is another key selling point. Unisys Corp., another Gold Certified Partner and member of the UM partner-advisory group, has shown clients in vertical industries such as financial services. For example, an investment bank is looking at implementing unified messaging for bond-desk traders.

Traditionally, those traders spent their days with phones crammed to their ears while shouting at banks of computer screens. With UM, "they can use IM to communicate back and forth with upward of 25 buyers" rather than just four or five, says Peter Tripp, vice president of global outsourcing and infrastructure services for Unisys in Blue Bell, Pa. "Then the seller on the desk would hit a but-

ton on the IM session and the buyer and broker's phones would ring so they could confirm the transaction" by voice, as per Securities and Exchange Commission regulations. "This is a sales manager that says, 'I can increase my brokers' productivity by 30 percent? Sold,'" says Tripp. "That's the stuff we're interested in."

Hardware and Software Opportunities

Beyond systems integration and implementation, the field is wide open for ISVs and hardware vendors to leverage the Microsoft UC platform. "Both Exchange [Server 2007] and OCS [2007] have a set of APIs that allow for integration with a wide number of applications," says Khalili. "We'll see a lot of real-time communications and presence integrated into traditional applications."

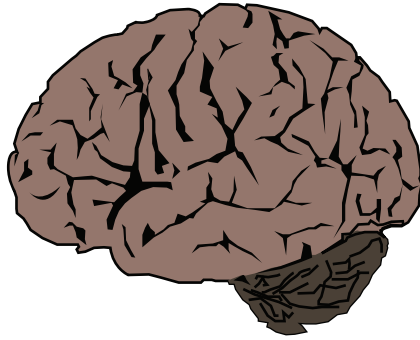
RADVision Inc., a Fair Lawn, N.J., video-conferencing solution provider and Gold Certified Partner, plans to integrate its Click to Meet product line with Microsoft UC technology, creating a single platform for audio/video/Web conferencing. Bob Romano, vice president of marketing for RADVision, thinks there are great opportunities for channel partners that provide consulting services for companies that want to do this.

Beating Microsoft to the punch, Objectworld Communications Corp. two years ago created Unified Messaging software called Unified Communications Server. This product allows companies to replace their PBX phone systems with VoIP with UM capabilities on Microsoft Exchange platforms. David Levy, president and CEO of Objectworld, a Gold Certified Partner based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, doesn't regret getting into a market on which Microsoft has now set its sights.

"We've shown Exchange Server 2007 working with Unified Communications Server. We fully agree with and foresaw Microsoft's vision in this area," says Levy. He adds that Objectworld's offering is a good choice for customers who want to get up and running on UM as soon as possible. ●

Lauren Gibbons Paul (lauren.paul@comcast.net) is a freelance journalist who specializes in writing about business and technology.

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